



Main Street, at about 1900, wasn't paved. At left is the new Groton Public Library.

(Courtesy Groton Historical Society)

## Groton carved from savage wilderness in 1655

Compiled by Christine Gillette

Groton's rich history began officially on May 23, 1655 when a petition to create "Groton Plantation" was granted by the General Court in Boston. The town was named on behalf of Dean Winthrop, a selectman and the petitioner, who originally hailed from Groton, England. It included land that is now Shirley, Ayer, Pepperell, and parts of Harvard, Littleton, and Nashua, New Hampshire. It was bordered on the south by Lancaster.

However, despite the official creation of Groton Plantation, few people came to live there until the

*Groton was named on behalf of Dean Winthrop, a selectman and the petitioner, who originally hailed from Groton, England.*

later 1600's due to the remote location. John Tinker, who operated an Indian Trading Post on Nod Road on the banks of the Nashua River, petitioned the General Court in 1659 to investigate the conditions in Groton that were discouraging any

new residents, and the court complied, creating a committee that later made recommendations on how to improve the settlement.

The earliest town records date back to 1662, and the book of records tracking the settlement from

1662 to 1707 was known as the "Indian Roll." The Indian Roll, stored in a roll, detailed the Indian wars and their impact on the town as well as other town events. The Indian Roll was later transformed into book form by Dr. Samuel A. Green, who was a noted Groton historian and is responsible for much of the recorded history of Groton's early days that is available today.

1663 - Groton began being connected with other area settlements with the laying out of the Lancaster and Chelmsford highways. A few

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## Early settlers victims of Indian attacks

by Mary Knepper

Life wasn't easy during Groton's early years. The days were filled with hard work. Sundays in this Puritan community were spent in church or praying at home. No recreation was allowed, not even for children. And the fear of Indian attacks hung over the populace like a dark cloud.

King Philip, Chief of the Wampanoags, saw that the settlers were changing the lifestyle of his people, taking over the land the tribe had previously been free to traverse, and putting up fences where the Indians used to hunt. He planned a series of secret attacks on settlements throughout New England.

In spite of some dragoons stationed here and there in the area, Groton and Lancaster, on the edge of the frontier, suffered repeated attacks.

The first attack came March 2, 1676. The Indians invaded some houses and carried away cattle. On March 9 they came and took swine and poultry, killed one man and carried away another. The most savage attack came March 13, when an estimated 400 Indians burned the entire town, said to be 40 houses, excluding four garrison houses. (One of these stood on the site of the high school, the second on the land just north of Town Hall, the third at the beginning of Court Street. The location of the fourth is unknown.) All the inhabitants deserted the town. As they retreated over the "ridges," they were fired upon by Indians. They finally found refuge in Concord.

Major Willard, with 70 horsemen and 40 foot soldiers arrived from Watertown, "but the Indians were all fled, having first burnt all the houses in the town save four, that were garrisoned, the meeting-house being the second house they fired."

According to Caleb Butler's

*In spite of some of the dragoons stationed here and there in the area, Groton suffered repeated Indian attacks.*

History of Groton, published in 1848, "A story is still occasionally told in relation to this place. It is said that travellers, when crossing the ridges in the night time, frequently heard the cries and screams of women and children, reminding them of this attack upon the retreating inhabitants in former times. It once happened that Col. James Prescott, on returning from Boston late on a fine moon-shining night, when he came to this place, happened to think of the tales so often told about 'cries and screams' there heard, and could not forbear to listen a little, that he might himself be a witness of the fact." He heard the cries, but upon investigation discovered a litter of young minks, according to Butler.

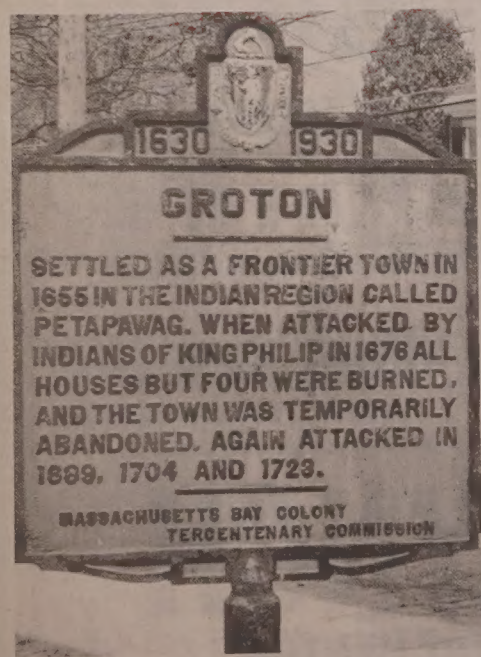
Throughout New England, 12 or 13 towns were destroyed, and about 600 settlers were killed, as estimated by Hoyt, writes Butler.

King Philip was killed, and in 1678, residents returned to Groton to rebuild homes.

From 1678 to 1689 there was peace, but the Indians were treated poorly. They were warned out of town in 1681, and could be seized, whipped and fined if caught taking a drink.

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**The Hartnett family, present publishers of The Groton Landmark, salute the newspaper's long and storied legacy.**



Our thanks go to Isabel Beal and the Groton Historical Society, Ralph Smith, and Barney Blood for their help. Sources used include Caleb Butler's "History of the Town of Groton, Virginia May's "Groton Plantation" and "Groton Houses," Forrest Bond Wing's "The Shirley Story," "A Pepperell Reader," Helen A. McCarthy Sawyer's "Lydia Longley, The First American Nun," and "The History of Lawrence Academy at Groton" by Douglas Alan Frank.



## Lawrence Academy's 200 years of living history

by Chris Chesak

GROTON - It is well known that Groton's Lawrence Academy is one of the premier private schools in the nation and a supplier of freshmen to the nation's best colleges and universities, but how did the school, now celebrating its 200th year, reach its current prestigious position?

Alumni Douglas Frank has chronicled the school's long and often difficult course through history and sheds light on Lawrence Academy's periods of prosperity and times of trouble in his new book *The History of Lawrence Academy at Groton*. Frank's book begins, not surprisingly, with the beginning.

The school's origin was certainly inauspicious, at least by modern standards. In the late 1700's Groton's "Publick School" was nothing more than a single unpainted school building located on a quarter acre of hillside property donated by a tanner. The school's first teacher taught classes in another building for five months while the schoolhouse was being built and the preceptor's salary was \$180 for half a year.

Regardless of the school's simplicity relative to modern standards, beginning such a school was an impressive accomplishment for its day. Groton residents who had worked toward the creation of the Academy must have felt much joy and pride when, after some debate in the state legislature about locating an Academy in either Groton or Westford, Governor John Hancock signed the bill of incorporation for Groton Academy in September of 1793.

After the local joy and pride died down, the school immediately fell into trouble. During the first decade, the Academy's bills were sometimes paid with IOU's, enrollment dropped from 115 students to 37 and in 1797 the trustees discontinued school for a quarter due to

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The graduation processions leaves the Main Building of Lawrence Academy in 1948.

(Courtesy Lawrence Academy)



# Longley family massacred, children kidnapped

Continued from page 1

In 1683 the town purchased title to the township from the Indians, paying eight shillings and four pence for a ten acre right, or 20 cents an acre.

In 1689 King William's war began. Indians again attacked the same towns that had been destroyed in King Philip's war. Soldiers were quartered in the garisons, which were also people's homes.

In 1694 the General Court passed an act prohibiting the desertion of frontier towns. People would lose rights to their land if they retreated for fear of Indian attack.

The family of William Longley, who lived a mile and a half north of the center of Groton, feared Indian attack but would have lost their land if they had gone to a safer place until the threat was over. Lydia had been only two years old when the town was burned during King Philip's War. Her mother had died, and her father William had remarried, giving his four children a new mother. William and Deliverance had four more children, many hands to work the farm, which was on what is now East Pepperell Road, or Longley Road.

In the summer of 1694, Lydia was 20 years old. Her brother Will was 19, Jemima was 14, John was 12, Joseph was 8, Richard was 6, Betty was 3, and Baby Nathaniel was 8 months old.

Groton suffered a savage attack July 27, 1694. The Indians turned Mr. Longley's cattle out of the barn early in the morning as a trap. Several members of the family ran

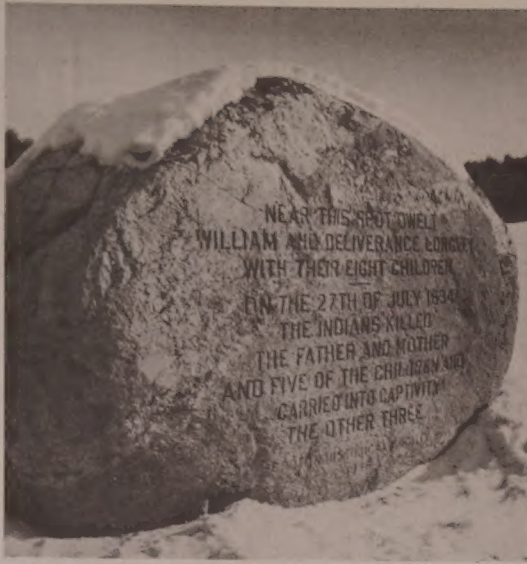
out to herd to cows out of the corn, and were ambushed, killed on the spot. Deliverance and five of the children were killed in the house, including Jemima who was scalped, although Caleb Butler's history notes some reports that say she was found sitting on a rock after the attack, alive. She grew up, married and had children, according to stories.

John, concerned about the sheep locked in the barn starving to death, begged the Indians to let him return to let them out, promising to return. He was allowed to go and kept his word.

Lydia, John and Betty, along with other children from Groton and Lancaster taken in the raid, were marched up to Canada to be sold.

John lived with the Abenaki Indians for five years, and would have become a chief if he had stayed. He was ransomed and reluctantly returned to Groton to live as a white man again. Stories say that he was so content to live a free life with the Indians that relatives had to physically remove him to bring him home. After coming back to Groton, he became involved in church and town activities, married twice in the General Court, remarried Groton, and had six children. Several of his progeny later immigrated to the southwest part of Groton, which became Shirley. Descendants include the Melvin Longley family of Shirley. John died in 1750 and is buried in the old Groton cemetery.

Lydia, the eldest daughter, was taken to Canada by the Indians and sold to a French Catholic family, who were very kind to her. Raised a



Next to Longley Road is this monument marking where the Longley family was massacred. (Photo by Jeff Stallard)

Puritan, she converted to Catholicism, entered a convent and remained there the rest of her life. Thus she became the first American nun. She and John never met face to face again, but corresponded regularly in adulthood, she chiding him for remaining a Protestant. Little three year old Betty died of a fever on the long trip north.

A boulder with a plaque marks the site of their home on Longley Road. The victims of the massacre were buried under an apple tree near the house, in an unmarked grave to prevent Indians from unearthing the remains.

Gershom Hobart, the minister, and his family also suffered at the hands of the Indians during this

raid. Two children were taken, one of whom was killed and the other rescued from captivity.

Two children of Alexander Rouse, a neighbor, were also killed. According to Butler's history, the great Puritan minister Cotton Mather wrote, "On July 27, (1694,) about break of day, Groton felt some surprising blows from Indian hatchets. They began their attacks at the house of one Lieutenant Lakin, in the outskirts of the town, but met with a repulse there, and lost one of their crew. Nevertheless, in other parts of that plantation, (where the good people had become so tired out as to lay down their military watch,) there were more than twenty persons killed, and more than a dozen carried away. Mr. Gershom Hobart, the minister of the place, with part of his family, was remarkably preserved from falling into their hands, when they made themselves the masters of his house, though they took two of his children, whereof the one was killed, and the other some time after happily rescued out of his captivity."

From 1697 to 1702, it was peaceful again. Then with the accession of Queen Anne to the throne of Great Britain, a war with France brought back the violence.

John Davis was killed by Indians in 1704 in his yard below Groton School on Shirley Road. He was taking laundry off the clothesline.

July 21, 1706, John Myrick, Nathaniel Healy and Ebenezer Leger of Newton were killed by Indians at Groton.

In 1707 three of Thomas Tarbell's young children were playing in a cherry tree about sunset when the Indians attacked. The rest of the community made it to the garrison house except the three children. John and Zachariah lived with the Indians, married Indian women and became chiefs of their tribes. They did return to Groton to visit their relatives, but chose not to stay. Their descendants, some with the Tarbell name, still live among the Caughnawaga Indians in northern New York and Canada. The sister Sarah was placed in a convent in Montreal and became a nun. These are cousins of John and Lydia Longley and in fact, Sarah became acquainted with her older cousin, then Sister Sainte Madeleine. A slate marker was placed in the wall in front of the James Lawrence house on Farmers Row in 1948 to mark the spot they were abducted from.

In 1709 John Shattuck and John Jr., age 20, living on Nod Road, were killed by the Indians at Stony Ford, way returning from their field on the west side of the river.

In 1724, John Ames, who lived on

the west side of the Nashua River, was killed by an Indian as he entered his yard. His son, at home at the time, shot and killed the Indian when he tried to force entrance through the door. This is the last man killed by an Indian within the bounds of Groton.

In 1725, the governments of Massachusetts and New Hampshire offered a bounty of 100 pounds for an Indian scalp.

Capt. John Lovell or Lovewell of Dunstable organized a company of volunteers from surrounding towns, including six from Groton.

After several excursions north, from which they brought back 11 scalps and were rewarded, they went to Pequawket, what is now Fryeburg, Maine. Lovell and eight men were killed in an ambush. Pausus, the Indian chieftain, was killed by John Chamberlain of Groton in a duel. Legend says that Pausus' son came to Groton to avenge his father's death, but was himself killed by John Chamberlain at his mill off Lowell Road.

Research used in compiling this account includes Helen A. McCarthy Sawyer's book "Lydia Longley, The First American Nun," "The History of the Towns of Groton," by Caleb Butler (1848), Virginia A. May's "Groton Plantation," and Forrest Wing's book on Shirley history

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## A walk around the Old Burying Ground

by Mary Knepper

The Old Burying Ground stands silent witness to the struggles and triumphs of the citizens of Groton during its first two centuries of life.

The headstones, ornamented with symbols of death and eternal life, mark the last resting place of many of Groton's proprietors and their families. American heroes who forged the destiny of this nation rest here in this quiet corner of Groton, not far from the site of the First Meetinghouse on Hollis Street.

Across Hollis Street is the oldest surviving house, built in 1706. On the other side of the Old Burying Ground is the old Baptist Church, now the Kalliroscope Gallery and home of Linda Matisse. Linda is a member of the Old Burying Ground Commission, which is in the midst of a the monumental task of docu-

menting and preserving information about the Old Burying Ground and those resting there. The commission identifies and photographs stones, repairs them, studies the carvers, and makes maps. Most of the slate stones are in good repair, but the marble stones are deteriorating due to acid rain. Isabel Beal, another member of the commission, says that they are studying the carvers who made the stones.

Looking at the decorations and style, certain artists can be identified. The earlier gravestones are marked with a skull, or "death's head." Later stones carry more hopeful symbols, and are ornamented with angels and flowers. The willows and urns came later, still.

Revolutionary War, heroes, housewives, tiny babies, their stories are here in the Old Burying

Ground, telling bits and pieces of Groton's story.

Some of the stones are illegible due to weathering and acid rain, but the epitaphs have been preserved in Dr. Samuel A. Green's 1878 book *Epitaphs from the Old Burying Ground*, which the Groton Public Library has in its historical section. It is often consulted by those doing genealogical work. However, most of the stones can easily be read.

The oldest monument is to James Prescott, who died May 9, 1704. He was the son of Jonas Prescott, a blacksmith, who himself engraved the tombstone for his son. As many of the tombstones are, it is slate taken from a quarry in Harvard. The epitaph reads as follows:

HERE LYETH THE BODY OF JAMES PRESCOTT HE DYED THE 9 OF MAY 1704

AGED 20 AND 7 WEEKS YERES OLD

Many of the tombstones contained hyphenated words and even names, and when the carver ran out of room on a line, he sometimes made the last few letters very small.

The town voted in 1724-5 to fence in the burying place. In 1728 they hired William Shattuck to mow the grass.

Jonathan Page, Samuel Tarbell and Nathaniel Woods were made a committee in 1738 to finally put up the wall. The burying ground was enlarged in 1802.

Joshua Whitney, who died August 7, 1719 at age 83, and James Robertson, who died December 5, 1720 at age 88, were among the earliest settlers of the town, living here before the burning in 1676. Deacon Simon Stone, who died in

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# Indian wars finally quelled

Continued from 1

years later, Groton joined with other area towns in funding and maintaining a bridge crossing the Concord River which made travel to Boston possible via Chelmsford and Billerica.

1664 - The first church in Groton was formed.

1665 - The town voted to build a meetinghouse, to be used for church services and other assemblies for Groton. The meetinghouse was started in one location, but the town voted to move it to a site between the old Baptist Church on Main Street (now the Kallioscope Gallery) and the common at the intersection of Hollis Street and Martins Pond Road. Before the construction of the meeting house, church services were held in the home of the minister.

The town pound was built nearby soon after the meeting house was constructed, and was located at the intersection of Hollis and School Streets.

1667 - Groton voted to build a town grist mill in the southerly part of town (now part of Harvard). John Prescott and his son, Jonas, were hired to do the job.

1668 - Jonathan Danforth surveyed Groton Plantation, laying out the shape of the settlement.

1669 - The selectmen petitioned the General Court for "one to marry persons" in Groton.

1674 - The selectmen set up a committee to lay out the Dunstable highway.

1676 - Groton became engulfed in King Philip's War, named after an aggressive Indian chief, with a series of Indian attacks that drove the residents from the town. On March 2, the first attack came, followed by more attacking Indians on March 9 and March 13. The Indians burned all of the houses in town, except for four garrisons; one near the site of the high school, another just north of Town Hall, and the third at the beginning of Court Street. The location of the fourth is not recorded. Residents abandoned the town, fleeing to Concord while under fire from the Indians.

1678 - Groton residents returned at the end of the King Philip's War to rebuild the town.

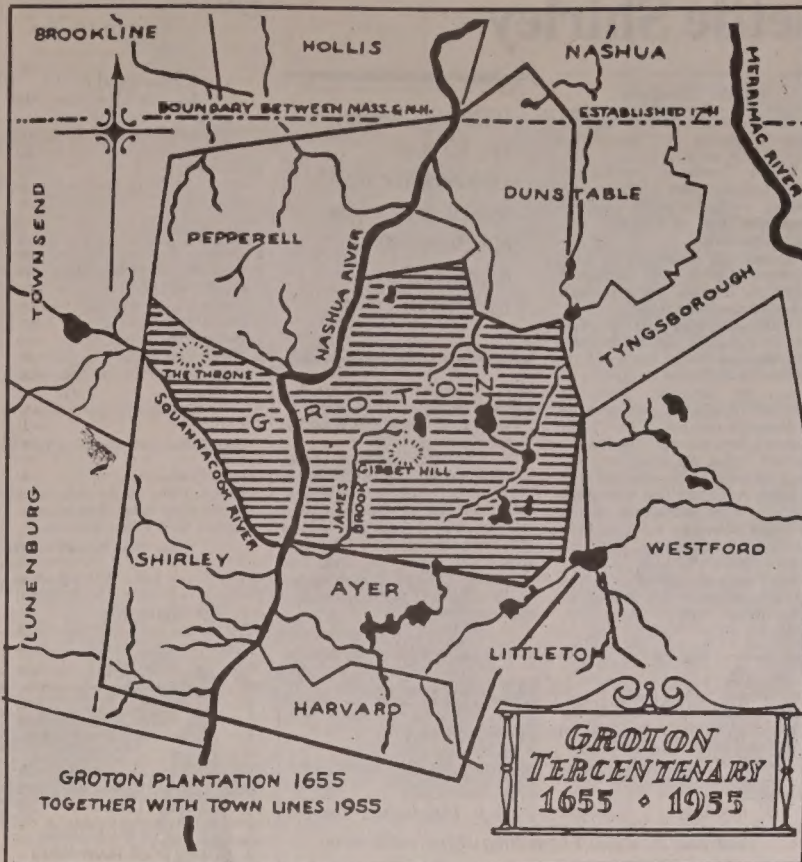
1679 - The second meetinghouse was built on the corner of Legion Common at the intersection of School and Hollis Streets.

1681 - Indians living in Groton were warned to leave town because residents found them "undesirable neighbors." They would return, however, even after residents purchased title to the 10-acre township in 1683 for eight shillings and four pence (approximately 20 cents an acre).

The first mention of schools in town records are found in 1681, when they stated that Groton "take care that there be a school or college of learning of children the English tongue to read."

1686 - Captain James Parker became the first town moderator on record.

1694 - Groton faced more Indian attacks in King William's war. The minister, Gershom Hobart, who lived at the site of the old Baptist Church, had two of his children taken by Indians, one of which was killed and the other rescued. The William Longley family, who lived on the present road leading to East Pepperell (since named Longley Road) was also attacked by Indians, who lured the family out of the house unarmed by letting the cattle out of the barn and into the corn. The Indians attacked and killed or took captive the members of the Longley family. William Longley's



Groton originally included most of Pepperell, Ayer and Shirley. (Map from Wing's "The Shirley Story.")

daughter, Lydia, was kidnapped, and was taken to Canada, where she became a nun.

1699 - Groton voted to build a cart bridge over the Lancaster River (now known as the Nashua River).

The Indian attacks on Groton continued in the early 1700's, with several Groton residents being killed or kidnapped by Indians.

The 1700's (we should put some type of head here)

1704 - During Queen Anne's War, John Davis was killed by Indians while taking clothes in off the line at

his house located on Shirley Road near Groton School.

1707 - The Tarbell family was attacked by Indians, and three of their children, John, Zachariah, and Sarah were kidnapped when they failed to take refuge with the rest of the family and neighbors in a garrison house located near their home. (The Tarbell house was located in the future site of the James Lawrence mansion.)

John and Zachariah Tarbell ultimately remained with the Indians, marrying and becoming chiefs of their tribes. Descendants of the two men still carry the Tarbell name and live with the

Caughnawaga Indians in northern New York and Canada.

Sarah Tarbell ended up in a Montreal, Canada convent, where she remained the rest of her life.

1709 - John Shattuck and his 20-year-old son, John Jr. were killed by Indians when returning to their Nod Road home from their fields across the river.

Groton began losing some of its territory in 1709 with the split that created Littleton. Land from a region called Nashoba in the southeast section of Groton was used to form the new town.

1714 - The town voted to con-

Groton became engulfed in King Philip's War, named after an aggressive Indian, when a series of attacks drove the residents from the town.

struct the third meetinghouse at the site of the current First Parish Church, off Lowell Road and Main Street.

1716 - The second meetinghouse was converted to a school.

1724 - John Ames was the last man killed in Groton by an Indian attack. He was killed while entering the gate of his home on the west side of the Nashua River. His son, hiding in the house, shot and killed the Indian responsible for his father's death when he tried to force his way inside.

1725 - John Shepley and Capt. Jonas Prescott drew 20 soldiers out of each of their companies to be snowshoe men, which were first used by military units in what was called Dummer's or Lovell's War.

Capt. John Lovell of Dunstable organized a company of volunteers from surrounding settlements, including Groton, to head out into Indian territory in reply to more recent problems with the Indians. The company made several trips, finally meeting up with a group of Indians headed by chieftain Paugus near what is now Fryeburg, Maine. During what is called "Lovell's Fight," Paugus was killed by John Chamberlain of Groton. According to legend, Paugus' son later came to Groton to avenge his father's death, and Chamberlain killed him near his Lowell Road mill.

1726 - Colonel William Prescott was born at a house on Old Ayer Road. Prescott grew up to command the Colonial forces at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

1730 - Groton lost a large part of its territory when the town of Harvard was incorporated from what was known as the "Old Mill District." A parcel of land in the eastern area of Groton was also annexed by Westford.

1735 - A triangular parcel of land that is now part of Milford, Wilton, Mason, and Greenville, New Hampshire was granted to Groton to compensate them for the loss of the Nashoba territory in 1715. This land was called "Groton Gore," and

was used for pasture for cattle.

1741 - Groton Gore was lost by the town when the line was drawn dividing New Hampshire from Massachusetts.

1751 - A powerful storm formed an island in the Nashua River, thereby creating what was called "Dead River."

1753 - Land from Groton was used to create the towns of Pepperell and Shirley.

1755 - Groton's fourth meetinghouse was built on the same site as the third meetinghouse (where the First Parish Church stands today).

1761 - The southern part of the Groton Inn was built as a house, then the home of Rev. Samuel Dana and his family. It would become an inn around 1780 during the Revolution when Jonathan Keep acquired the house.

1771 - To replace the loss of Groton Gore, the town was given land in Berkshire County in the current site of the towns of Becket and Otis.

1772 - The Powder House was

Continued on page 8

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We're proud of Groton's history and our small part in it, and we're excited about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us.





Next to Longley Road is this monument marking where the Longley family was massacred. (Photo by Jeff Stallard)

## Old Burying Ground...

Continued from 2.

1741 at age 85, was also an original proprietor.

Benjamin Farnsworth buried his two wives next to each other. Patience died in 1733 at age 31, and Rebekah died in 1756 at age 54.

Mary Prescott Relick, wife of Jonas Prescott, is also buried here. She was born September 28, 1653, the only daughter of a wealthy Sudbury family. Mary's parents refused to let her marry a blacksmith, trying to match her up with a lawyer and tried in every way they could to prevent Mary and Jonas from seeing each other. The story goes that they barred her window, but Jonas would whisper endearments through the grate during storms, when no one could hear. Mary's parents secretly removed her to Stow, and Jonas scoured the territory looking for her. He finally discovered her, and went to a quilting bee dance where she would be, both pretending they were not previously acquainted. She insisted on marrying Jonas, and her parents disinherited her. Jonas and Mary had a dozen children, ten of whom grew up and had large families. She lived to see 176 of her descendants. She died October 28, 1735 at age 82.

John Shepley, who died in 1736 at age 60, had been kidnapped by the Indians during that infamous raid in 1694, and all his father's family was massacred. They were neighbors of the William Longley family, which suffered a similar fate, with only two children surviving the raid.

Phineas Parker, whose parents, James and Mary Parker were killed by the Indians in 1694, and was held captive four years, died August 13, 1744 at age 63. His tombstone says that he became lame because of "cruelty of ye Salvages."

The Shepley monument contains a genealogy of the family, detailing that the Indians massacred all the Sheples (as it is spelled on the stone) save John, age 16, who was captive four years and returned to Groton.

A tablet marks the final resting place of Rev. Caleb Trowbridge, late pastor of the Church of Christ in Groton, who died Sept. 9, 1760, at age 69. Col. William Lawrence, who died May 16, 1764, at age 67, could look back on many accomplishments. He was Justice of the Peace, and a representative for the town of Groton with the Districts of Pepperell and Shirley in the General Assembly of the Massachusetts.

Simon Daby suffered a triple tragedy when his wife Mercy died at age 34 on August 31, 1751. The baby, Sarah, born at her mother's death, lived 15 days, and 3 year old Phebe died a few days later on September 20. The tombstone reads:

A loving Mother, a Pleasant Child,

An infant dear, all lies here. Naked as from the Earth we came, And crept to Life at first, We to the Earth return again, And mingle with our dust.

An untold love story can be imagined when looking at the tombstone of Lieut. John and Sarah Holden (spelled Holdin in carving). Hearts are carved above their names. Sarah died December 21, 1753, at age 59, and her husband John died six days later at age 69.

Tragedy hit another family when Benjamin Farnsworth Jr. died at age 20 with "ye small pox" August 31, 1757. His father, Benjamin Sr., died September 18, at age 58, also of smallpox.

Smallpox hit another family when William Parker, age 20 died January 8, 1761, followed by his father William, age 51, on February 1, and his sister Sibbel on May 10 at age 17. Something called the "throat distemper" is given as the cause of death on the tombstones. It was also called the Pepperell fever, most likely diphtheria, and carried off whole families. Abigail Prescott, daughter of Dr. Oliver Prescott and Lydia, died at age 5 on August 5, 1765.

Then Lucy Prescott, age 37, and Thomas Prescott, age 10 months, died August 10. Lucy's mother Abigail Prescott, also mother of Col. William Prescott, died at age 68 on September 13.

James and Susanna Prescott's children Abel, age 5, William, age 3, and Sarah, age 17, were carried away between September 16 and September 20 1765. The tombstone reads, "From Death's arrest no age is free."

Amos and Benjamin Farnsworth, father and son, drowned in what was called the Lancaster River, now called the Nashua, on December 5, 1775, while crossing in a boat. Benjamin's body was found the next day. Amos wasn't found until late March. They both lie in the Old Burying Ground.

The remarkable life of Capt. Abram Child, who was born in Waltham in 1741 and died in Groton, January 3, 1834, is detailed in a monument. He entered the army in French War at age 17, was with Gen. Amherst at the capture of Ticonderoga at Crown Point in 1759, was a Lieutenant among the Minute Men, aided in the Concord Fight, and the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775.

"Joining Washington, he was one of the immortal Band which crossed the Delaware, Dec. 25, 1776, and turned the tide of war, in the Victories of Trenton and Princeton. Detached to the North he fought in the two Battles of Stillwater, and witnessed the surrender of Burgoyne, in 1777. Rejoining Washington, he bore equally the Frosts of Valley Forge, and the Heats of Monmouth in 1778. Detailed with Gen. Wayne, he crowned his military career, by heading the Infantry as oldest Captain in the gallant capture of Stony Point in 1779 where he received the only wound that marked his eventful services.

The marble family marker of Joshua Bently, a Boston man who married a Groton girl, is badly damaged by weathering, and cannot be read today. It stands near the stone wall, a ways before the Legion Hall. Joshua Bently is known as the man who rowed Paul Revere across the Charles River April 18, 1775, for his famous ride to Lexington and Concord.

Capt. Job Shattuck, another faithful patriot during the Revolutionary War was among those who took the law into their own hands during the difficult period following the war. The economy was bad, and the nation was in debt. Shattuck was a noted leader in the insurrection of 1786, known as Shay's Rebellion, and was tried for high treason. He was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, but was subsequently pardoned. He died January 13, 1819, at age 84.

His wife Sarah was one of Prudence Wright's band of courageous women who, dressed as men, guarded the bridge located where Pepperell's covered bridge now stands in April of 1775, and caught a Tory spy. The band included another proud daughter of Groton, Susanna Quales, who is also buried here.

Some Groton folk died in the war. Nathaniel Stone died at Dorchester on October 22, 1776, age 17. Simon Patch was wounded at "ye White Plains" in October 1776 and brought home on a litter, a trip of 200 miles. He died of his wounds on New Year's Eve, 1776, at age 28.

The tombstones also carry a bit of philosophy to think about. Upon Mrs. Phebe Richardson's gravestone, dated April 28, 1823, at age 46, is the poem: "Death is a debt, to nature due, I've paid the debt, and so must you."

Upon the stone of Susanna Prescott, daughter of James Prescott Jr. and Hannah, who died August 14, 1795 at age 3, are the words: "So fades the lovely blooming flower, Frail smiling solace for an hour; So soon our transient comforts fly, and pleasure only blooms to die."

## Groton forefathers settle Shirley

by Mary Knepper

The following history is compiled from information in "The Shirley Story" by Forrest Bond Wing.

Groton Plantation, granted in 1656, included land which is now Shirley, Ayer, Pepperell, most of Dunstable, part of Littleton, and part of Harvard.

A road was developed by 1673 between Groton and Lancaster along the Nashua, going through what is present day Shirley.

William Longley and his wife Joanna moved to Groton in 1663. The settlement was destroyed by Indians in 1676. The family moved away, but returned. Their son William Longley Jr. and his wife Deliverance and five of their eight children were murdered by Indians in 1694. Lydia, the oldest, was sold to the French in Canada and later became America's first nun. John, age 11 when kidnapped, stayed with the Indians for years, but later came back to civilization. "Deacon" John's three sons, William, John and Jonas Longley, migrated to Shirley in 1751, or possibly earlier. Settlements had sprung up in the north and eastern sections of what was later Shirley as early as 1720.

**William Longley, Jr., his wife Deliverance and five of their eight children were murdered by Indians in 1694.**

them and eastern sections of what was later Shirley as early as 1720.

Hazen road was accepted by the town of Groton in 1729.

In 1747, the name of Jonas Longley appeared on the list of the 33 men who petitioned for separation from Groton. The separation was not granted then. The petition was finally accepted in 1752, and took effect January 5, 1753. The town was named for Governor William Shirley, Chief Magistrate of the Royal Province.

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# Lawrence Academy founded in 1793, survives trouble in late 1800's

Continued from 1  
financial difficulties.

By 1802 Groton Academy had received a land grant from the state and increased its capital through investments by the trustees to the then impressive sum of \$4641.

Although it had barely averted financial catastrophe, the Academy had already begun to distinguish itself from other schools. From the school's inception, females were not only allowed to enroll, they were also allowed to choose any class in the Academy's curriculum.

Alan Whipple, late author of *Academy Days/Groton Days*, wrote, "Rare was the town that even considered provision for female education above the common or dame school level."

In 1808, an entire Female Department was created and had its own preceptress to teach it. The department evolved into the "Young Ladies Seminary" in 1823 and took in a young woman named Margaret Fuller. Fuller eventually became an author and was accepted as an equal in the transcendentalist circles of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

By the school's 50th birthday, there were two school buildings and nearly 1,000 girls and over 1500 boys had passed through Groton Academy.

Two years later the trustees acknowledged the substantial gifts of Amos and William Lawrence by changing the school's name from Groton Academy to Lawrence Academy at Groton. The Lawrence brothers contributed clocks, a telescope, hundreds of books, the entire Brazer estate, monetary gifts for repairs, improvements and expansions and established a permanent endowment fund.

Lawrence Academy grew in prestige and prosperity over the next decade and significantly expanded its faculty. The first alumni and library catalogs were published, a debating society and student newspaper were founded and student enrollment increased both in number and in ability.

Frank said of this period in the school's history, "It is as if the intellectual, literary and educational developments of the enlightenment in America descended upon the Academy all at once."

In 1862, the first school seal was established along with the first diplomas and in 1863 the first dormitory, Bigelow Hall, was built.

Among these events came another first for Lawrence Academy, the first schoolhouse fire. On July 4, 1868, children of Principal Aiken threw firecrackers on the roof and started a blaze that all but destroyed the building.

The Academy held classes for



The Academy schoolhouse (at left) and Brazer House in 1820. This is the earliest surviving image of Groton Academy and is the work of Henrietta Butler, a daughter of Caleb Butler and an Academy student beginning in 1810. (Courtesy Lawrence Academy)



The second schoolhouse of Lawrence Academy, built in 1871, is totally destroyed by fire May 27, 1956. (Photos courtesy Lawrence Academy)

only 28 students in the dormitory that year and then suspended operations in 1869 to collect money for a new building. Lawrence Academy remained closed until a new brick schoolhouse was completed in 1871.

Enrollment peaked at 146 students one year after the new schoolhouse was dedicated, but declined until it reached 101 in 1879. With the expense of constructing a new building and the loss of revenues from lower enrollments, the school again faced hard times. The Academy was operating with a deficit and much of its interest was overdue. Hard times were getting harder. Regardless of its financial woes, the Groton school continued to distinguish itself from other institutions of learning while working to break down racist prejudices.

Frank writes, "By the middle of the nineteenth century coeducation

virtually became the rule, except in some of the largest cities in the East. For Lawrence Academy, the next logical challenge to promote democratic ideals was the admission of black students. For that to occur the secular and non-discriminating standards of the Academy had to be extraordinary - which they were."

One of the school's first Afro-American students was Robert Terrell. He came to the school in 1879 and worked at odd jobs to support his extremely frugal lifestyle (he often lived on baked beans for weeks at a time while at school) while rigorously pursuing his studies.

Terrell maintained a straight "A" average at Lawrence and went on to graduate cum laude from Harvard, graduated as valedictorian from Howard University Law School and was appointed to the municipal



The schoolhouse lies in ruins following the fire.

court of the District of Columbia, making him the nation's first black federal judge, by President Roosevelt in 1909. Terrell was reappointed by Presidents Taft, Wilson and Harding and in 23 remarkable years of service, only five of his decisions were ever overturned.

By 1880, Terrell's alma mater was still financially strapped and the trustees decided (again) to suspend operations until they could pull themselves out of debt. The trustees gave themselves until January 1, 1881 to raise \$10,000. By June of that year, little money had been raised, but the trustees decided to reopen the school, still with a \$1,000 deficit. Voting whether or not to close the school would continue until the school's 90th anniversary in 1883.

The anniversary saw the graduation of Lawrence's 11 seniors and a celebration with music and dinner for 500 was held. Over \$7,000 was

raised for the Academy at the dinner, but the school's financial condition remained precarious.

Lawrence faced a new challenge on a different front as new urban private schools began to sap some of the Academy's prospective students and public high schools began to flourish.

"By the 1880's, the public high schools had surpassed the academies in the number of students they enrolled," writes Theodore Sizer. "And by the turn of the century, their influence was predominant. In the face of this competition, the academies either went out of existence or altered their form."

Groton School, founded by the Lawrence brothers' cousin by marriage Endicott Peabody and with an Academy donation of 90 acres of land, was immediately successful. The school was able to draw upon

the wealth of its Episcopal students' families and according to Frank, "the elite, untitled shadow of Groton School began to fall upon the Academy."

Lawrence's enrollment continued to fall. Only students from within the state and New Hampshire were enrolled where national and international students had flocked to its halls once before. A few proposals to merge with Groton's public high school were even considered by the trustees.

The Academy continued its slide when, in 1888, almost the entire student body walked out of the schoolhouse and demanded the resignation of the school's principal John Hayward due to his poor teaching ability and mismanagement of the school. Hayward resigned and Lawrence Academy stood at the school year's second semester with less than 40 students enrolled, a debt of \$5,000 and no principal.

A new principal was found, but only 11 boys and 15 girls attended the school for the academic year 1889-1890.

One of these boys was a wide-eyed youth with wavy hair by the name of Percy Wallace MacKaye. The son of the author of a widely known dramatization of "Pride and Prejudice" and an eminent actor, MacKaye would graduate from Lawrence and then Harvard to go on to a outstanding writing career. In 45 years of writing, MacKaye created over 25 plays and over 100 books of poems, essays and biographies.

Original and extensive marshalling of alumni support and gifts received during the Academy's centennial celebration in 1893 let Lawrence emerge briefly from debt but by 1895 the trustees had slipped back in over their heads again. By then the panic of 1893 had become a full blown depression that reduced the school's endowment fund by 25 percent and increased the difficulty of the trustee's financial struggle.

The school closed for the 1898-1899 school year for repairs paid for with \$5,000 in borrowed money but to compete with more popular schools, Lawrence began an effort to promote itself through references and admitted day students for the first time. The trustees also voted to limit enrollment to boys only.

A student's week at the Academy was filled with 40 minute long classes from Monday to Saturday. Their days were rigidly prescribed with a 6:30 a.m. rising bell, breakfast at 7, assembly at 7:45, dinner at 1 and recreation until 4:30. Exercising in the gym was required from 4:30 until 5:30 and was followed by supper at 6. A one or two hour

Continued on page 15



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# Groton joins in fighting for independence

by Mary Knepper

At a town meeting in Groton October 14, 1765, inhabitants voted to instruct Abel Lawrence, Esq., Representative for Groton and districts of Shirley and Pepperell, to take action in protest of the Stamp Act and other infringements upon their rights.

Written in Dr. Oliver Prescott's hand: "We are greatly alarmed, and filled with the utmost concern to find, that such measures have been taken by the British minister, and acts of Parliament made, which press hard upon the invaluable rights and liberties of the British American subjects, and more especially at the act called the 'Stamp Act,' by which we apprehend a very unconstitutional, unequal and insupportable tax is to be laid on the Colonies. And, if this should be carried into execution, we expect it will become a further grievance to us, as it will afford a precedent for the Parliament, in future time, to tax us without our consent, in all such ways and measures as they shall judge meet."

The selectmen called a town meeting to formulate measures to promote local manufacturing and discourage use of foreign products to thwart the Stamp Act.

The March meeting in 1770 considered how to prevent the importation of English goods. They resolved that "the people of this province are entitled by the royal character to all the rights, liberties and privileges of native Britons," and that the levying of taxes by the British Parliament upon the colonists infringed upon those rights. The resolution was



*Colonial William Prescott and his men hurried to Concord and then Cambridge, but did not overtake the battle.*

signed by Oliver Prescott, Josiah Sawtell, Nathaniel Parker, Joseph Sheple, Jonathan Clark Lewis, Isaac Farnsworth, Henry Farwell, and Amos Lawrence.

The duty on tea agitated the community. A meeting was called to address this, whereby they voted support of Boston's actions against the East India Company, calling the tax "a very subtle plan of the ministry to enforce and enslave the Americans." They voted that the citizens of Groton would not buy, sell or use tea subject to a duty tax.

The town meeting held in January 1775 extended the ban of buying and selling to molasses, syrups, coffee, indigo and other items imported from Great Britain or Ireland.

The March 1775 meeting said that some residents had refused to sign the covenant not to use British imports, and the town voted that those people had eight days to sign it. The names of those who refused to sign the "Association paper" would be posted in the public houses of the town. Posted as refusing to sign on April 12, 1775, were Rev. Samuel Dana, Joseph Sheple, Jonas Cutler and Joseph Chase. Seven days later, the British advanced on Concord and Lexington, and the "shot heard round the world" was fired.

The minutemen were called out early in the morning and prepared to march toward Concord. Two companies of minute men and officers, 101 men in all, marched to Concord but were too late for the

battle. Col. William Prescott, son of Benjamin Prescott, although born in the center of Groton where a stone marker honors the spot, moved before the age of 21 to the part called the "Gore," which later became Pepperell. In 1774 he was appointed colonel of a regiment of minute men from Pepperell, Groton, Hollis and other nearby towns. On the morning of April 19, 1775, a messenger rode from Concord to Pepperell, arriving at about 9 a.m., with the news that British soldiers had come out from Boston and killed eight men at Lexington. The fighting continued at Concord. Col. Prescott sent word for the minute men to gather and march to Groton, and from there to Concord. The Pepperell company, although further away, arrived there quickly, and headed out ahead of the Groton companies. Col. Prescott and his men hurried to Concord, and then Cambridge, but did not overtake the battle.

After the men left, Prudence Wright of Pepperell put out the call for neighboring women, including Sarah Shattuck and Susanna Quailles of Groton, to gather at the spot where the covered bridge now stands in Pepperell, dressed in their husbands' or brothers' clothing and carrying muskets and pitchforks. They were determined that no Tory would pass that bridge. Captain Leonard Whiting of Hollis, New Hampshire, a noted Tory carrying dispatches from Canada to the British in Boston, came along on horseback, along with another Tory who escaped, said to be Prudence

Continued on page 8

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## 1816: The year without a summer

These notable occurrences were noted in the church records made by the Rev. Mr. Joseph Emerson, as noted by Caleb Butler in his History.

A terrible hurricane struck July 28, 1748 about 1 p.m. According to church records made by Rev. Mr. Emerson, "It tore up a vast number of large trees by the roots, entirely demolished two or three buildings, shattered several dwelling-houses, carrying off the boards from the roof, sides, &c. It tore away a considerable part of the roof of the meeting-house. When it came with its violence, it threw down the fences, stone walls, and laid the corn even with the ground." Not one life was lost, but the damage was considerable.

Abiel Richards, over 30, was killed instantly on July 19, 1753, in helping at the raising of the Dunstable meeting-house.

A major earthquake was felt at 4:15 a.m. November 10, 1755, lasting three or four minutes and affecting all of New England. Chimneys and stone walls were knocked down, but no one was killed.

A deadly illness, "a burning ague," swept through the Pepperell area in 1756. From August 5 to the end of October, over 180 persons fell ill, of which 18 died.

The illness returned in July of 1757 and continued through mid-October, this time striking 219 people, of which 25 died. 17 were heads of families.

The illness again returned in 1758, from August 1 to mid-October. 96 fell ill of the fever, of whom 11 died. Seven were heads of families.

This was called the "Pepperell Fever," and was probably diphtheria. According to Caleb Butler's history, "The proximate cause of this Pepperell fever has been thought to be the miasma arising from decayed vegetable matter. The swamp or meadow of John Shattuck, near Henry Jewett's had been overgrown with bushes and various vegetables; and in order to kill them and bring the land into a state of cultivation, a dam was built and the swamp overflowed with water. When the water had been drawn off, and the vegetable matter exposed to a summer's sun, the stench was very offensive, and extended perceptibly for several miles around."

During this time of illness, the district was still required to fill a quota of soldiers for the war. Benjamin Jewett's house burned to the ground January 5, 1757.

A thundershower with hailstones as large as hens eggs hit June 15, 1763 in Dunstable and Pepperell. It did considerable damage to crops and homes, and the hailstones covered the ground.

Jonathan Blood, 20, son of Deacon Blood, fell off a cart and was run over. He died in an hour and a half.

Eleazer Gilson's house burned September 18, 1767. Not much could be saved.

David Shed's house burned down January 1768, and his mother escaped by climbing out a window.

Eleazer Chamberlin, age 22, drowned June 24, 1769, in the Lancaster (Nashua) river. He had gone in to wash himself.

Isaac Corey was drowned April 11, 1772, when his canoe filled up and he was swept over the falls in the Lancaster river. He wasn't found until August 2, his body floating about a mile below where he was last seen.

The following events were noted by Capt. A. Fitch, who lived near the Nashua River (the present Fitch's Bridge), as reported in Caleb Butler's History.

"May 19, 1780. Then it was an exceedingly dark day, such as was not known before in North America."

"The darkness of this day and the night following, which was proportionally great, was satisfactorily accounted for." It appears that there had been many forest fires in New England and Canada, and the smoke blocked out the light.

On April 22, 1785, he reported that it was good sledding, there being two feet of snow, and wood was carried on sleds over Sandy Pond, it being still frozen so late in the year.

A great flood, with no rain, carried off Fitch's bridge and another bridge March 18, 1794.

1812 was a very cold and wet year. In January and February, thermometers read 14 degrees below zero. A 24 hour blizzard hit May 4, July and August were cloudy, and little Indian corn ripened.

What seems to be a hurricane hit September 23, 1815. "Fences, fruit trees, whole forests, chimneys and whole buildings, were suddenly prostrated, and the earth was strewn with fruits and fragments of all kinds in promiscuous confusion." The storm hit all over New England's sea coast.

1816 was the year without a summer. It was very cold and dry, and the sun was obscured. Frosts hit from June 6 to 11, with squalls of snow on June 11. Frosts also occurred in July and August. A severe frost hit September 27 and 28, and the Indian corn was mostly destroyed.

Fitch's and Jewett's bridges were carried away in a flood in early March, 1818, brought on by swiftly melting snow. The flood also caused great damage to dams, mills and other bridges.

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## Pepperell separates from Groton in 1775

by Mary Knepper

By the 1720s, settlers were living on the west bank of the Nashua River in Groton, and several garison houses had been built. The first white child to be born on the west side is said to be Samuel Shattuck, Jr., September 1726. Before bridges were built, those living on the west side had to ford the Nashua at its shallowest points. One was "Jo Blood's Fordway," near the present covered bridge, of Jewett's bridge. The other was the "stony wading place" near the present Route 119 bridge. The area which became Groton West Parish was 16 square miles. These farmers had difficulty in going to church, required in those days, in both distance and crossing the river. Several even drowned in the crossing.

Thus the part of Groton west of the Nashua River and north of the county road was cut off from the rest of Groton. The people petitioned that it be made its own precinct or parish in 1742. "Groton West Parish" remained part of Groton, but was authorized to set up its own meeting-house and find a minister.

The first meeting of the parish was held at the home of William Spaulding. Benjamin Swallow was chosen moderator and Eleazer Gilson parish clerk. Also present were Isaac Williams, James Lawrence, Jonathan Woods and Joseph Whitney, committee; Samuel Wright, treasurer; Jonas Varnum, Moses Woods and Samuel Shattuck, assessors; and William Spaulding and Jeremiah Lawrence, collectors.

Where to build the meeting-house was a matter of such contention it nearly split the parish in 1745. Some wanted it built near Joseph Blood's fordway, near the paper mills. Others insisted it be built three-fourths of a mile northeast of the center of the parish. Peleg Lawrence and Josiah Sartell asked the Great and General Court to get involved, and appoint a committee to select a site. They chose to set the meeting-house across from the present Community Church.

The battle between the two factions was not yet over. When the lumber to build the meeting-house was loaded and ready to move, James Lakin, who favored the

chosen site, took the lead with his team. Those favoring the east site, many of whom were Shattucks, were enraged, and attempted to stop the lumber wagons by pricking the oxen's noses, and standing along the path, threatening to halt it. The lumber did make it through and the meeting-house was built.

April 12, 1753 Groton west parish was made a district and named Pepperell, in honor of Sir William Pepperell. About this time Shirley also gained its own independence from Groton to govern itself as a District.

In 1751 a small wedge of land belonging to Dunstable was added to Pepperell by petition.

By 1765, Pepperell's population had risen to 758 inhabitants, with 130 families and 117 houses. Over half the population was under 16 years of age, due to large families and shorter life expectancy.

The Pepperell Fever hit during this time, carrying off whole families of children, and many mothers and fathers. The plague seemed to come in the summer months, and killed 103 people.

Pepperell was a farming community, with a number of mills. The first one was in operation by 1730 on the Nashua at Babbittset, near the main street bridge. A forge operated by Ephraim Lawrence was in operation there by the 1770s.

A new meeting-house was dedicated March 8, 1770. The parish had 152 families.

This period of time also saw a lot of road building. Bridges were built, so people didn't have to ford the Nashua, risking their lives.

In Pepperell minute men were active in the Revolutionary War, and Pepperell resident Col. William Prescott's name has gone down in history as the leader of the American forces at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Prudence Wright and her band of women are also notable for their action in catching a Tory spy.

The town finally incorporated in 1775, but did not include East Pepperell. This was not brought into Pepperell until the mid 19th century.

Information for this article was compiled from "The Pepperell Reader: The Early Settlers" by Ruth P. Liebowitz, and Caleb Butler's History of Groton.

## Ayer incorporated 1871

by Mary Knepper

The following chronology of the Town of Ayer was taken from the Town of Ayer Centennial book, printed in 1971.

Nonaicoicus Farm, which included most of the present village of Ayer, was granted by the Massachusetts General Court to Major Simon Willard in 1659.

Groton and Harvard Road was laid out in 1668 to provide access from Groton to John Prescott's new grist mill in Harvard.

In 1671, Major Simon Willard erected a mansion on Nonaicoicus Farm, near where Verbeck Gate now stands, and moved there from Lancaster. The mansion was burned by Indians during King Philip's War in 1676.

John Page, Jr. erected a sawmill at Sandy Brook in 1712, at the site of Ayer's present water department pumping station.

James Stone built the house which still stands on Harvard Road near the town line in 1729.

The Nonaicoicus Mill, an iron foundry with water-powered trip hammer, was erected on Nonaicoicus Brook in 1733, where Moore's mill later stood.

James Park purchased 200 acres of land on both sides of Park Street in 1738.

Groton District School No. 12 was built on the site of the Bank Block in 1760.

In 1762, Middlesex County laid out the Littleton and Lunenburg Road, over the present Willows Road, Sandy Pond Road, East Main Street, Main Street, Park Street and Fitchburg Road.

John Longley erected mills on the Nashua River in 1790, where the ruins of the ice plant built by William Mitchell in 1871 can still be seen.

In 1792 Phineas Nutting purchased the largest remnant of Nonaicoicus Farm, embracing most of the present village of Ayer. His farm house was on the county road opposite Elm Street.

The First Sandy Pond School, Groton District No. 11, was built in 1792.

The county laid out Shirley Street to the Nashua River in 1798. The part of Shirley which was annexed to Ayer in 1871 was ceded by Groton to Shirley in 1798.

The Fitchburg Railroad was built in 1844. Its first depot was at Flanagan's Crossing on Groton and Harvard Road. There was no village except at Old Common near Stone's or Fletcher's Mill.

South Groton's destiny was changed with the construction of the Worcester and Nashua Railroad to cross the Fitchburg Railroad in 1848. Shortly after, the Stony Brook

Railroad to North Chelmsford and the Peterboro and Shirley Railroad to West Townsend were built. The latter railroad was eventually extended to Mason and Greenville, NH. Groton Junction sprang up almost overnight from a few farms to a village larger than Groton Center by 1870. Railroad switching yards, repair shops and many factories brought employment, new housing and prosperity.

The Plow Shop west of the current Plow Shop Pond was built in 1850.

The first store was established in 1851 and the Baptist Church was organized.

In 1852 the First East Main Street School was built of wood on the lot where the courthouse now stands.

The Unitarian Church was founded in 1853, its edifice was built in 1855 on the Town Hall lot and burned in 1872.

The tannery began operations in 1854 and continued with lapses until the great fire in 1961.

In 1855 the first Roman Catholic Church began. The buildings were erected in 1858, 1870 and 1880. St. Mary's Parish originally included Groton, Pepperell, Shirley, Townsend, Harvard and Littleton.

The Congregational Church organized in 1861, and a building was erected in 1867 at the corner of Washington and Cambridge Streets.

Civil War Camp Stevens was constructed on Fitchburg Road next to the Nashua River in 1862 for the training of the 53rd Infantry Regiment Mass. Volunteer Militia. 23 buildings were erected in 12 days by the plow company, which became the property of Ames Plow Co. after 1864.

The Public Spirit, a weekly newspaper, was founded by John H. Turner in 1869. The second East Main Street School was built in 1869, later razed in 1968 to make way for the new courthouse. It was Ayer's oldest municipal building at the time.

Merchants Row was destroyed by fire in 1870 and never rebuilt in the same way. The merchants affected by the fire moved to Main Street.

Luther Burbank, who later became a famous horticulturist, lived at the age of 20 in what was later the Toohey house on Park Street, near the present Bubble II. He worked as a printer's devil for the Public Spirit.

The present Sandy Pond School House was built in 1870.

The Town of Ayer incorporated from Groton and Shirley territory in 1871.

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# Native son George S. Boutwell elected governor

Continued from 8

1845 - Groton Academy changed its name to Lawrence Academy to honor the Lawrence brothers, who were great benefactors to the school. The Groton Lodge, Independent

Order of Odd Fellows was formed on May 28.

1846 - The Union Meetinghouse was remodeled into a two-story

structure. The size of "Groton Junction" (later renamed Ayer) was determined at a railroad meeting at Hoar's Tavern (the Groton Inn). The tavern was run by Daniel Hunt at that time.

1847 - The new Groton cemetery at the end of Hollis Street was consecrated.

1848 - The Worcester and Nashua Railroad opened their line through Groton.

1850 - The West Groton post office was established on March 19, with Adams Archibald as postmaster. The post office was located in the railway station.

The town decided on a new site for the post on Fagot Lane (now West Street) on its western end near the railline.

1851 - Groton resident George S. Boutwell, a former selectman and School Committee member, was elected governor of Massachusetts.

1854 - The first free public library in town was established with a \$500 gift from the Honorable Abbott Lawrence of Boston who had grown up in Groton. The town was required to put up \$500 of its own money to receive the gift, and they unanimously voted to do so. George S. Boutwell, George F. Farley, Joshua Green, David Fosdick, and John Boynton were appointed to a committee to decide how to use the money on books and a suitable location for the library. They decided on Margaret Blake's store at the corner of Main Street and Station Avenue, and Blake acted as librarian for the next five years.

1855 - The town held a bicentennial celebration.

1857 - More land was given to Pepperell from Groton, this latest parcel comprised East Pepperell.

which was settled after the railroad was run through that area.

1861 - The Groton Artillery's became Company B of the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment and saw action in the Civil War. Known as "The Old Sixth," the unit was the first to volunteer for service, fighting Confederate soldiers in the streets of Baltimore on April 19.

1867 - A public well was set up at the corner of Hollis and Main Streets and was equipped with a town pump.

1868 - The schoolhouse at Lawrence Academy was destroyed in a July 4 fire when the children of Principal Aiken threw firecrackers on the roof, igniting it. Only a few students were taught at the school for the next two years while the schoolhouse was rebuilt.

1869 - President Ulysses S. Grant visited Groton, and Governor George Boutwell held a reception for him at his Groton home.

The town voted to abolish school districts, and the Chaplin School (now Legion Hall) was built.

1871 - Classes resumed at Lawrence Academy with the completion of a new brick schoolhouse. Groton's new Butler High School was also completed on what is now the site of Prescott School.

Ayer separated from Groton and was incorporated on February 14. Ayer was named after former Lowell resident James Cook Ayer.

1872 - The Honorable Josiah K. Bennett was the first judge to preside over the First District Court of Northern Middlesex County when it opened that year on Merchants Row in Ayer.

1873 - The town voted on April 7 to erect street lamps in the village. The first women, Miss Clarissa Butler and Mrs. Mary T. Shumway, were elected to Groton's School Committee.

1874 - The top floor of the Butler High School, known as Music Hall was dedicated. The hall was the site of a free public singing school for both children and adults.

The town decided to name the schoolhouses and cease designating them by number.

1875 - The Baptist Church on Main Street was remodelled. The Selectmen appointed the first Board of Fire Engineers.

1876 - Groton joined the rest of the nation in celebrating the centennial of the Declaration of Independence on July 4.

1880 - The tax rate was set at \$4 per \$1,000.

The town's first telegraph office opened in the railway station, with the first message sent to Nashua, New Hampshire.

1881 - A telephone office was opened on April 29 in a building at the corner of Main Street and Station Avenue.

1882 - The town's first bandstand was dedicated. Originally, it stood on the grounds of Butler High School, but was later moved to the common on Main Street where the Lawrence Fountain stood (the

intersection of Main Street and Pleasant Street).

1884 - Groton School was founded on Farmers Row.

1885 - West Groton's Christian Union Church was constructed.

1887 - A building referred to as "the hall" and an engine house were built in West Groton. "The hall" refers to what is now called Squannacook Hall.

1893 - The Groton Public Library building was dedicated.

1894 - The Groton Historical Society was formed.

1895 - The Luther Blood Free Lecture series began.

1897 - The Groton Water Company was formed, and the reservoir on Gibbet Hill was filled on November 29. The reservoir's roof was replaced in 1992.

1898 - The first annual firemen's ball was held by the newly-formed Groton Engine and Hose Company. The town adopted the Town Seal, designed by Dr. Samuel A. Green. The seal denotes the year Groton was founded with the words "Faith" and "Labor."

Continued on page 10



Nate Nutting's house on Old Ayer Road. (Courtesy Groton Historical Society)

## Three violent deaths in the 1880s rock the town

by Mary Knepper

The small community of Groton, usually peaceful, was disturbed by three murders in one neighborhood over a period of seven years in the 1880's.

Mrs. Crew was murdered at her home January 17, 1880, on the Boston Road three miles out of Groton. Mr. Crew found the body about 9 p.m. that night. Shot four times, Mrs. Crew lay in a pool of blood on the floor of her downstairs bedroom, covered with a sheet and a mat.

A travelling wood turner, Sterns Kendall Abbott, who had stopped at the house that day, was arrested with little evidence, yet taken to trial and found guilty. Gossip said that Mr. Abbott was not guilty, and that Mr. Crew was withholding information. Even so, Abbott was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was pardoned after serving many years.

Not far from the Crew house, another murder was committed on November 11, 1884. Mrs. Susan Prescott, an old woman known to many as Aunt Susan, lived on the road which runs from Boston Road to the back of the former Prescott School towards Cow Pond Meadows. Her companions, George and Mary Baker, had agreed to take care of Mrs. Prescott until she died, and then they would inherit the house and whatever else Mrs. Prescott had.

Mrs. Prescott was found beaten to

death, probably with a stick of firewood that autumn day. The Bakers were tried for the murder, however, it appeared that Mrs. Baker was the guilty party and in those days a woman could not be charged with first degree murder. The woman caretaker was charged with second degree murder and received a light sentence. Her husband, an accomplice, was not charged.

During the trial, Mrs. Prescott's 11 year old nephew Nesbit testified, apparently the last person to see her alive. His tender age in court caused quite a stir.

Living near the crossroad from Boston Road to Old Ayer Road was an eccentric couple, Nathan Nutting and his wife. They had an old house near a mill run by a waterwheel. Nathan and his wife were the target of "home invasions" even in those days. Boys and men came to their house and demanded cider. When Nathan refused, they broke into his house and beat him.

Nathan applied to the selectmen and others for protection, but found no help. He tried to get a writ against the ringleader to no avail. So Nathan swore that the next person to bother him would get shot. The evening of May 16, 1889, Henry Winch visited him, became argumentative, and chased Nathan upstairs. Nathan shot and killed the man. He was put in jail but soon bailed out. The Grand jury declared it an excusable homicide.

This account is based on Virginia A. May's book "Groton Plantation."

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The Old Blacksmith's Shop, turn of the century, later torn down and replaced with a gas station on Main Street. (Courtesy Groton Historical Society)



The Groton Public Library, at its opening in 1893 (Courtesy Groton Historical Society)

# Tarbell and Boutwell Schools built, women get the vote

Continued from 9

1900 - Amory Lawrence gave the town the Lawrence Playground. The entrance to the playground was on Broadmeadow Road at the former site of Aaron Brown's potash works, which was burned during Shay's Rebellion. The playground is now the town fields, with fields for baseball and soccer, and a basketball court, as well as a playground for children.

1901 - Mrs. E.G. Low established the Lowthorpe School in the house that is now a convent (Country Day School) on Main Street.

1902 - Main Street was covered with macadam, with milestones placed on the right hand of the roads leading into Groton. (One is still visible near the intersection of

Lowell Road and Flavell Road.) Only one five-mile stone was placed, that being set up in East Groton. More milestones were placed the following year.

1905 - The first Groton School chapel was moved into town and became the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Groton celebrated its 250th anniversary on July 4.

1908 - Groton Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows No. 95 was established.

1909 - Electric lights came to Groton.

1910 - The first train ran over the track that was straightened near the

depot to correct a deep curve near the village. A new depot was built the following year.

1911 - Groton's first Police Chief was appointed.

1912 - Groton stopped using church bells as fire alarms when a fire whistle was installed at Town Hall.

1913 - The Groton Woman's Club was organized, and still exists in Groton today.

1915 - The Tarbell School and Boutwell School were built. Tarbell School was the single-longest continually operating school in Groton until the Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee voted

to close it in 1990.

The West Groton branch library was established. Odd Fellows Hall was constructed on Station Avenue.

1916 - The old wooden bandstand that had sat on the common on Main and Pleasant Streets was removed to the fairgrounds at the end of Jenkins (Fairgrounds) Road. A new bandstand was given to the town by James Wooley, a member of Groton's Town Band, and was erected on the common to replace the old structure.

1917 - Groton men began volunteering for the armed services as the United States entered World War I on April 6.

1918 - Armistice Day was declared on November 11, and Groton servicemen began returning home.

Joseph T. Shepley gave the town a fountain in memory of his twin brother, Granville, who died at age 47. The fountain was set up in Squannacook Square in West Groton.

The first two letters sent to town via air mail were received in Groton.

A "wayside pulpit" was set up in the park in front of the First Parish Church.

1919 - June 28 marked the formation of the Laurence W. Gay Post No. 55 of the American Legion. The post was named in honor of a Groton man killed in World War I.

Memorial trees were planted on the common at the intersection of Hollis Street and Martins Pond Road.

1921 - Women were allowed for the first time to vote at the Annual Town Meeting to elect town officials on February 7.

The Woman's Club sponsored the setting up a Community Christmas tree on the common with the town's bandstand. A permanent Christmas tree was set up in that spot the following year, and residents of Groton still gather there for the annual lighting of the tree.

1922 - The Groton Town Forest was established to honor Groton men killed in World War I.

Continued on page 11

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# Butler High burns, high school rebuilt

Continued from 10.

The auxiliary to the Laurence W. Gay post of the American Legion held their first meeting on April 18. Groton was divided into two voting precincts.

1923 - The Groton Garden Club was formed, and continues in 1993 to be active in town.

1924 - The development of houses around Lost Lake started.

1925 - A gasoline train began running through Groton on the Nashua and Worcester line of the Boston and Maine Railroad.

A fire on August 18 caused a great deal of damage to the Butler High School, and high school students were forced to attend school in other locations until the new Groton High School (now Prescott School) was completed in 1928.

The beginnings of Groton's first highway garage were built on Willowdale Road: town sheds. The

highway garage would later be constructed and then torn down in 1989 to make room for Groton Commons elderly housing.

1926 - The Garden Club held its first annual Flower Show.

1928 - The new Groton High School opened its doors in September.

1929 - St. James Catholic Church was built in West Groton.

1930 - A July 4 fire destroyed the castle built on Gibbet Hill by William Bancroft. The castle had housed the Groton Private Hospital, operated by Dr. Harold Ayres, to treat TB patients.

1931 - The Nashoba Board of Health was formed. Now called the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health, it continues to provide services to Groton.



The Groton Inn around 1910. (Postcard courtesy Ralph Smith)

1932 - The Wild Flower Sanctuary was started on Dead River in the Town Forest, but was later destroyed due to damage from floods in 1936 and the hurricane of 1938.

The founder of the Groton Hospital, Dr. Kilbourn died. He had operated the hospital (located in the current site of Donelan's Market) for 25 years.

The new concrete bridge over the

Nashua River was opened at Primus (the section of river on Route 119).

1934 - The Boston and Maine Railroad ended 86 years of passen-

ger train service through Groton.

1936 - Areas of town were underwater and much damage was done due to a massive flood.

1938 - On September 21, a hurricane hit Groton, damaging much of the town.

Groton School Headmaster Rev. Endicott Peabody turned over the job to Rev. John Crocker.

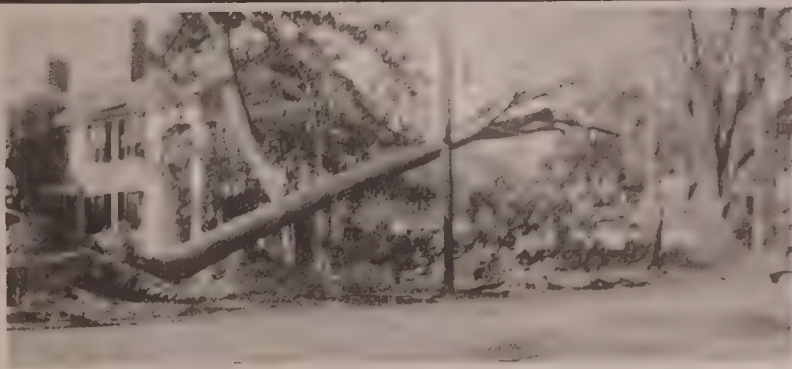
1939 - The Governor Boutwell House on Main Street was opened as a museum.

The Works Progress Administration began a map of the town showing all of the property.

1940 - The Odd Fellows Hall on Station Avenue was converted to a fire station.

A new telephone station was built on Hollis Street to get ready for the conversion of telephones to dial systems.

Continued on page 12



Trees were downed all over town, the Legion Hall lost its roof.



Groton saw terrible devastation from the Hurricane of 1938. (Photos courtesy Ralph Smith)

## Hurricane of '38 changes Groton landscape forever

The Hurricane of 1938 ripped through New England in September, leaving uprooted trees, buildings with no roofs, and downed power lines everywhere. Champney Street resident Ralph Smith, 87, who worked for the Groton Electric Department at that time, recalls that the science of weather prediction wasn't as accurate as today. They knew a storm was coming, but they had no idea

what a whopper it would be. "It had rained for two days already, and saturated the ground. Water was standing everywhere. That's why so many trees were uprooted in the hurricane," he explains.

He and the other men were out working on downed lines as the storm was coming up, some on Old Ayer Road, and he was on Farmers

Row. The wind came up hard and fast, and their boss, seeing that they were fighting a losing battle, closed down the main switch and told the men to go home. Ralph explains that the lines were more vulnerable to burning out if they had power going through them. It was best to just shut it off.

After the storm passed, the electric department workers spent two days just cleaning up. Trees and

poles were down everywhere. The roof was blown off Legion Hall. To string lines, they had to put temporary crossbars on trees, since most of the poles had broken or toppled. The men were out dawn to dusk trying to restore electricity to Groton residents. Everyone was exhausted, Ralph said. "It took 30 days until the last house got power again."

West Groton had another prob-

lem. The water pumping station depended on electricity, so they had to find a way to keep the reservoir filled. One man came to the rescue with a tractor, the engine of which ran 24 hours a day pumping water. The tractor had to be tended at all times, and water was thrown on it occasionally to keep it from overheating, Smith said.

Other hurricanes came in the Forties, but none had the widespread

destruction of the unnamed Hurricane of '38. With most hurricanes, several towns are hit harder, but they can call in help from towns that are spared. With the '38 storm, all of New England was knocked for a loop, and no one had workers to spare. Now, 55 years later, Ralph remembers that tumultuous time with clarity. It was the biggest storm Groton ever had.



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# Groton-Dunstable Regional High School born

Continued from 11

1941 - A forest fire tore through land east of the town center for two days in April.

The Groton Fire Tower was built atop Gibbet Hill, and for the first time, a member of the fire department was always on duty in case of a fire. A firefighter remained at the fire station around the clock to sound the fire whistle in case of an emergency.

The Rotary Club was formed by Groton residents, including Dr. Harold Ayres.

The overhead bridge at Newell Station in West Groton was removed.

William P. Wharton donated Hazel Grove Park to the town. Hazel Grove Park is the location of the Groton Fairgrounds.

Dial telephones began being used in town.

Pearl Harbor was bombed, bringing the United States into World War II. Many Groton residents would serve bravely in the war.

1942 - Britt Airways started the first airport in northwest Groton, the area of town where the Crosswinds housing development is now located.

1943 - The town dedicated its World War II honor roll near Groton Town Hall on August 15.

1946 - Emergency communication took a step forward in Groton with the installation of two-way radios in the fire station, fire trucks and police cars.

1947 - The Union Congregational Church initiated the custom of lighting up the church's steeple this year, and the other churches in town soon followed suit.

The Lowthorp School property became the Convent of the Holy Union, which now is also the home of Country Day School on Route 119.

Groton voters adopted a bylaw creating a Planning Board.

1948 - Lawrence Academy's expansion began with the construction of the Fred C. Gray building, which now houses the MacNeil Lounge, the site of many school, community, and Groton Public Library programs.

1949 - The town's League of Women Voters was formed.

1950 - The town fire department bought the first ambulance to aid Groton residents and neighboring towns.

Margaret Blair Johnstone began her 11 years as pastor of both the



The store in West Groton in 1955, now Sherwin Brothers. (Groton Historical Society)

Union Congregational Church and the Christian Union Church.

1951 - Groton Elementary School (now Florence Roche School) opened its doors for the first time.

1953 - The new Groton Community Hospital was built on Moison Hill. The former Groton hospital on Main Street was torn down later in 1963 and the rise of land it was built on levelled to make room for a grocery store and parking lot.

1954 - A permanent World War II memorial was erected and all other war memorials were moved to Legion Common on Hollis Street. The temporary monument that had been set up near Town Hall was removed.

1955 - The town's tercentenary (300th birthday) was celebrated from June 26 to July 4.

The block of stores on Main Street opposite the Groton Inn was constructed.

1956 - The main building of Lawrence Academy burned in May on the day of graduation.

The Haystack Observatory,

beginning as a radar station, was built on Millstone Hill off of Route 40 on the Groton-Westford line.

1957 - The wooden fire tower on Gibbet Hill was removed and replaced with a steel structure that was nine feet shorter. The fire tower is still standing.

A new administration and classroom building was constructed on Powder House Road by Lawrence Academy.

A swimming pool was built at the Groton Inn.

1958 - Groton underwent a reassessment of all property in town.

The West Groton fire station was built, and the Lost Lake fire station was completed the following year.

1959 - The town voted to build a new high school.

1962 - The building known now as Groton-Dunstable Regional High School was opened, and the former high school (now Prescott School) became the junior high school.

1964 - The town established a Historic District and the Historic

District Commission.

1966 - West Groton's Joseph E. Cutler Memorial Park was opened for use by townspeople.

The efforts to clean up the Nashua River began with the circulation of petitions later presented to Governor Volpe. Groton resident Marion Stoddart was instrumental in efforts to restore the river to its natural beauty.

Groton and Dunstable formed a board to plan their merger into a regional school district.

The Groton Historical Society began work to inventory all historic sites and buildings in town as required by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The Groton Inn closed in July without warning.

1967 - The Knopps Pond conservation area was acquired by the town, and construction began a year later on a recreation area near the

pond.

Ground was broken for the Nashoba Valley Technical School in Westford. Groton was one of the area towns to become a member of the school.

1969 - The Groton Inn reopened after renovations.

The Knopps Pond Conservation and Recreation area was managed as a town beach for the first time.

1970 - Lawrence Academy dedicated its new ice hockey rink to Norman Grant, who served as the school's athletic director for many years.

1973 - Irene Buck founded the Groton Center for the Arts.

1975 - Groton celebrated the country's bicentennial, including a program at the Union Congregational Church by the Groton Historical Society on "Life in Old Groton," and a Colonial Ball at the Groton Country Club.

Tom Park retired after 22 years as selectman, and Loretto Moen became the first woman to be elected to the Groton Board of Selectmen.

The town's new landfill opened on Cow Pond Brook Road.

The daughter of the late, in-

dustrialist and Groton resident Frederick Dumaine donated land on Long Hill Road to the New England Forestry Foundation for conservation use by the residents of Groton. It is known as "Groton Place," and is a wildlife sanctuary.

The Nashoba Valley Chorale was formed by Groton residents Ruth Treen Wise and Michael Manugian.

1976 - Bicentennial celebrations continued with tours, picnics, and Old Burying Ground pageant, a banquet and ball, a parade, a fair, and the burying of a time capsule on Memorial Common.

The Groton Inn closed and was sold at auction.

The Groton Minutemen were invited to march in the Cherry Blossom parade in Washington, D.C.

1977 - The senior citizen drop-in center moved to Squannacook Hall in West Groton, and renovations on the building began.

The town's old dump on Nod Road was closed.

1978 - New England Business Service constructed a new building on Main Street.

The front of Groton's post office was renovated for handicapped

Continued on page 13

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# Blizzard of '78 hits buries Groton in snow

Continued from 12.

The blizzard of 1978 hit, burying Groton in snow resulting in hazardous travelling conditions and school cancellations.

Jack Allen donated five acres in West Groton to the town for conservation use.

1979 - Groton began using the 911 emergency telephone system.

Groton Elementary School was renamed Florence Roche School in honor of teacher Florence Roche who worked in the school system for 46 years.

1980 - Harvey Sargisson and a team of volunteers set the stone steps at the town beach, later renamed Sargisson Beach.

Alice Smith was named the Noble Grand of the Middlesex Rebekah Lodge.

The underground gas tanks at the Mobil station on Main Street (now closed) leaked fuel into the Hollis Street property of Gertrude Foss.

1981 - A program to reduce street lighting costs by shutting some of them off was underway. A later Town Meeting vote earlier in the year to cut the street lighting budget in half resulted in over 300 street lights in town being shut off.

1982 - The town purchased the Groton Water Company.

A reunion of Butler-Groton High School students held in Lowell was attended by graduates from 1905 through 1962.

1983 - Christopher Anderson rescued a 79 year-old man from a submerged canoe in Baddacook Pond.

Scottie Emslie, an active member of the police and fire departments since 1947, retired.

1984 - Groton School celebrated its centennial with a year-long series of events during the 1984-85 academic year.

1985 - The Christian Union Church celebrated its 100th anniversary. Indian Hill Arts split away from the Groton Center for the Arts and set up its program in Littleton.

Angry Groton residents took the Groton Electric Light Department manager and commissioners to court, challenging the commissioners' votes during the 1970's and early 1980's to enter into power purchase and sales agreements with the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant. The case was ultimately decided in

## A 79 year old man was rescued from a submerged canoe in Baddacook Pond.

favor of the Electric Light Department by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

The common at the intersection of Main and Pleasant Streets was refurbished with a gift from Groton School, and included the addition of benches and trees.

The Woman's Club presented the town with the Avenue of Flags.

Hurricane Gloria hit the town, felling trees and knocking out power.

1986 - Plans began for the Groton Housing Authority's elderly and family affordable housing project on Route 40, adjacent to Lawrence Academy. The development was completed in 1991, and is now known as Petapawag Place.

Groton began making monthly payments of over \$28,000 to the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant.

The Nashoba Valley Chorale celebrated its 10 year anniversary.

Housing developments were booming in Groton, with plans underway for the 100-unit Westridge Farm next to Nashoba Community Hospital and multifamily housing at the Groton Leatherboard mill in West Groton (to date, neither has been built), and other developments received the Planning Board's approval, including Crosswinds, Watson Homestead, Old Homestead I and II, and a subdivision on Martins Pond Road.

1987 - Groton residents protested the United States Postal Service's plans to move the town's post office from Main Street downtown to the Wiewel property next to Bank of New England on Boston Road. Due to the protests, the post office was never moved, and a new site for the post office is still being sought.

Consultants hired to do a town space needs study recommended



An aerial view of Groton taken in 1955. (Courtesy Groton Historical Society)

that the public safety building be sited on Pleasant Street, elderly housing be built on Willowdale Road, the highway department be located at the town landfill, the Electric Light Department stay at its Station Avenue location, and a government center be established at Prescott School.

The town started its lawsuit against Conductorlab for their role in contaminating groundwater at its North Main Street site and the drinking water of residents in the Mill Street/Gratuity Road area.

## Moison's Hardware; a mainstay of downtown Groton

Moison's Hardware, opened in 1922, has long been a mainstay of Groton's downtown. Founded by George L. Moison, the hardware store started off as a paint store on the corner of Willowdale Road and Hollis Street in what was known as Wood's Block.

Moison's grandson, Harold Sargent, bought the business in 1958, and operated it until his retirement in 1988. During the years Harold Sargent owned Moison's, the store took its current location on Main Street and employed many members of the family, including Harold Sargent's mother, Frances, his aunts Gertrude Chamberlin and

the late Helen Burnham, and his uncle George C. Moison.

The store continues to be a family operation. When Harold Sargent was ready to retire, his sons Rick and Dana bought the business after working for their father since high school. Currently, Rick and Dana Sargent are readying to build their new building in the former site of Bruce Pharmacy further up Main Street. The brothers bought the Bruce Pharmacy building in June 1992 at a bank auction, and the building was demolished this fall to make room for the spacious new Moison ACE Hardware.

for zoning changes and a new master plan for the community to be completed.

1989 - The newly-constructed Groton-Dunstable Middle School was opened.

Groton's Town Meeting voted to buy the Groton Country Club from Wang Laboratories.

1990 - Due to shortfalls in revenue, a Special Town Meeting was held in October to cut all departments' budgets by approximately 12 percent.

A Town Meeting vote earlier in the year to cut the street lighting budget in half resulted in over 300 street lights in town being shut off.

1991 - The Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee voted to close West Groton's Tarbell School after over 75 years of housing Groton students. Plans are underway in 1993 to reopen the school in September.

Groton's new \$2 million public safety building was opened on Pleasant Street.

After over 10 years of extensive renovations, the Groton Inn was reopened by George Pergantis.

1992 - A mainstay of Groton's downtown, Bruce Pharmacy was demolished to make room for the new Moison's Hardware, to be built by Rick and Dana Sargent. Bruce Pharmacy, closed in 1986, had fallen into disrepair and was auctioned to the Sargents after the bank foreclosed on its mortgage.

Prescott School was reopened for classroom use, after housing only the school district's central offices since 1986.

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# Barney Blood descended from town's earliest settlers

**by Mary Knepper**

Barney Blood, who carries on the family agricultural tradition in West Groton at Blood Farm, is proud to say he is a descendent of one of the earliest settlers of Groton. Proprietor Richard Blood, who was here back when the town was first formed in 1655.

A list of the original proprietors of Groton includes Richard, Robert, James and Joseph Blood, Richard and Robert are named as petitioners for the plantation, and Richard was a member of the first board of selectmen. He was made town clerk in 1668, the fifth to serve in that position.

Of the original proprietors,

Richard was the largest with a 60 acre right. He was the son of English born James Blood, who lived at "Blood's Farm" in Concord, next to the Old Manse and not far from North Bridge.

Richard lived at the place called "Nod" in Groton, near Tinker's trading post. This area is next to the Nashua River, just south of the present Route 119.

In 1661, Richard largely expanded his landholdings. He bought 20 acres from John Tinker, along with a house and fences, near the common. He also bought ten acres near the river, ten acres of pine forest, twenty acres of meadow in the "broad meadow" area, ten acres of upland, ten acres of land near the river next

to Tinker's trading post, another twenty acres near Tinker's land west of the river, and ten acres in "half moon meadow."

Richard's name appears on the list of those who fought in King Phillip's war, which defended against the Indian attacks the settlers feared and endured.

Richard was also on the three man committee to lay out roads between Concord and Groton. Most of the Bloods in this area are descended from Richard and his wife Isabel. They had five children. James, their oldest son, was killed by Indians in 1692. Richard died in Groton in December 7, 1683. He had given his son Nathaniel, who was born in 1678, a 20 acre right in 1682.

As the line continues, Nathaniel's son William was born in 1711. William's son Jonas was born in 1754, and Barney is fairly sure he lived in West Groton. There was a huge old Elm tree near the present Blood Farm that Barney remembers as a child, called Jonas' Tree.

Jonas's son Ebenezer was born in 1778, and died at age 40. His son Edmond was born in 1804. Barney has slaughtering permits with Edmond's name on them from 1884.

His son Edmund L. Blood was born in 1832 and died in 1919, buried in the new cemetery, says Barney.

Barney's grandfather, Charles Edmond Elliot Blood, was born in 1865 and died in 1930, and lived in the present Blood Farm. Barney's father lived across the road, but moved into the brick house at Blood Farm upon his father's death.

Barney's father, Elliot Lewis Blood, was born in 1897 and died in 1977.

Barney said his father wanted to name him Charles, after his grandfather, but Barney's mother wanted to name him Elliot Jr. They had taken the train into Ayer to go shopping, and came back with a recording of "Barney Google." Barney's father told his wife, "You can name the baby anything you want. I'm going to call him Barney."

And he did. Barney's aunt kept the record, and later gave it to him. It is framed and hangs on a wall in the den.

Barney was born in 1923, in the same room his father had been, in the house across from Blood Farm.

Barney's son Jeffrey Edmond, born in 1947, is a dairy farmer in New York. His other son son Richard Elliot, born in 1959, works here at Blood Farm.

The family continues on with Jeffrey's children Sarah, born in 1982, Amy, born in 1983, and Bonnie, born in 1985, and Richard's children Richard Elliot, born in 1983, Megan, born in 1984, and Matthew, born in 1986.


These children can proudly trace their ancestry back to the earliest settlers of Groton and this nation.



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# Lawrence Academy ready for 200 more years, standing the test of time

Continued from 5

study period followed and lights out came one hour later. Tuition for a boarding student's full year of school was \$430 and a day student paid \$100.

However, tuition revenues and endowment income were still insufficient and the minutes of the trustees in September, 1903 described the financial situation as an "emergency."

Some of the financial troubles were offset by the enrollment of ten Chinese students in 1909. Their tuitions were paid by the Boxer Indemnity Fund, a fund designed to refund the excessive reparations paid by the Chinese government after the Boxer Rebellion. Lawrence was one of only a handful of preparatory schools selected by the Chinese government for their students.

The school's monetary difficulties were partially forgotten when Mrs. Emma Shumway's generous donation of 12 acres of land created soaring athletic enthusiasm. Exercises in the gymnasium and athletic exhibitions became popular and a baseball team was started. The Academy's first football team was organized in 1901. Eight years later the team went undefeated while spring saw the baseball team win ten of 12 games. Not bad at all for a school with fewer than 40 boys.

The 1915 baseball team was 15-2 and beat out defending Suburban League Champions Somerville High School 5-0. Lawrence's pitcher for the game was John Murray who later went on to play for Georgetown University and then the Boston Braves.

Despite athletic achievements, Lawrence's debts continued to mount. These debts and the involvement of the United States in the First World War led to another closing of the school from 1918 until 1922. In 1917, almost the entire senior class enlisted and the loss of military aged students and faculty left the trustees no other choice but closure.

Fifty-seven of Lawrence's students and teachers actively served in the war, 10 of whom were officers. Frank writes, "When the war ended on November 11, 1918, the campus of the Academy stood still and uninhabited. The Academy bell was silent; it neither tolled for the armistice nor for the three of her sons who died in the service of their country."

After receiving a post-war bequest of \$350,000 by Doctor Samuel Green, Lawrence Academy was ready to ring its Academy bell and reopen its doors. After a spending

spree by the trustees that included the purchases of the Motley property (now the Shedy Faculty House) and the Bigelow Estate in 1921, 30 boarding students and six day students entered a school in 1922 that was again, unbelievably, in debt.

The year 1925 is described by Frank as a "Greek Tragedy." The very popular Principal Howard Bridgman, who had attracted an impressive faculty to the school while instituting Winter Carnivals, field trips to the mountains, and additions to the curriculum that attracted 63 students to the Academy, was blamed by the trustees for Lawrence's entire deficit. Under pressure, a shaken and distressed Bridgman resigned.

The reaction was catastrophic. Two Trustees, John S. Lawrence and George S. Wright, resigned. The entire student body walked out. Bridgman moved to Shirley, and along with James Chester Flagg, master of the Academy Junior School, established the Bridgman School there. The entire Junior School from Lawrence Academy enrolled there in September, 1925.

Fred Gray walked with no warning into the maelstrom of controversy that had evolved from the Bridgman episode to become the school's new principal. He was hired by the Trustees, who gave him no hint that the students and faculty had left. After he had toured the campus for the first time his wife Elizabeth could tell something was wrong. No student or faculty lists were posted. They found out the school had lost its accreditation for college entrance.

Under Gray's leadership through the 1920's and 1930's, the school began to thrive and regain its lost prestige. The trustees steered the school through the depression while enrollment, total tuition fees and college placement all reached new heights. In 1932 the total number of students had reached 88 and tuition brought in \$42,000. Donations of \$10,000 in 1935 by trustee William Spaulding and a \$15,000 legacy from alumni John Robbins helped to ease Lawrence's financial woes and by 1937 the Academy was finally out of debt.

During this time, Lawrence was having unprecedented success in an area that is no longer considered the school's strong point: athletics. Lawrence Academy's Vic Heyliger ('33) was the first U.S. born professional hockey player and later coached the University of Michigan hockey team. Ray "Scooter" MacLean played football for the



The Lawrence Academy Orchestra in 1930-31, under the direction of Arthur W. Ferguson (sitting at piano). (Courtesy Lawrence Academy.)

Chicago Bears and preceded Vince Lombardi as the Green Bay Packer's headcoach. William "Lefty" Flynn ('35) was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame and Roger Robinson ('36) was Duke's fullback in the 1940 Rose Bowl. Various football and baseball players went on to play at Harvard, Boston College, Syracuse, the University of Connecticut and Holy Cross College.

By 1942, every aspect of Lawrence's campus life had been changed by World War II. The academic year was shortened to free students for summer war work, classes were conducted six days a week to graduate students faster and by 1943, 347 of Lawrence's 500 graduates from the previous 18 years were serving in the armed forces. Twenty alumni of Lawrence Academy died in the war.

The 1945 yearbook said, "To the Lawrence men smashing in tanks across Germany, dropping from the skies behind enemy lines, driving through scorched islands in the Pacific, soaring through the blue of the day and the black of the night - to the Lawrence men serving in all capacities in all parts of the world, we humbly dedicate this yearbook. We guard zealously each star and swell with pride that those men, who but yesterday were laughing

boys on the tree-shaded hillside, have heard the call of their country and have answered it."

Five years after the war, Principal Fred Gray chose a Japanese student to be the first recipient of the 85 Spaulding Scholarship. In his book, Frank says, "The choice of a Japanese student was an expression of the secular mission and the non-discriminatory values upheld by Lawrence Academy. Only five years after World War II, with America plagued by communism and the Korean conflict, Principal Gray challenged the academic community to confront prejudice and discrimination."

After the war, Lawrence gained much momentum and grew both in size and stature. Undergraduates numbered over 70 and several veteran postgraduates were enrolled. A gymnasium, dining hall and recreation building was completed in 1948 and named for Principal Gray.

By 1955, a record number of students had enrolled (163) and the Spaulding Building dormitory was completed, bringing the school's number of buildings to 10. But on a cool Sunday in May of 1956, that number dropped back to 9.

It was Baccalaureate Day at the

Academy. The cause of the fire in the second schoolhouse building was believed to have been an explosion in the third floor laboratory for chemistry, biology and physics classes. Whatever the cause, the 85 year old schoolhouse was completely engulfed in flames while fire departments from Groton, Ayer, Pepperell, Townsend and Fort Devens battled the blaze. Ignoring their efforts, the fire ravaged the structure and destroyed it completely. Heroic efforts were made to save irreplaceable documents, paintings and records.

Final exams, barely saved from the fire, were given in the gym on bleachers.

Faculty member Norman Grant came up with the idea of bringing a Fort Devens barracks building piecemeal to Lawrence for use as a temporary schoolhouse. The entire barracks was cut up, transported to Groton and rebuilt by workers and faculty members. Three offices and 11 cramped 8x12 classrooms were installed in the two story 80x30 building.

The nomadic barracks served faithfully for one year, until construction of the third schoolhouse building was completed, and it was torn down in 1958.

Three years later, Lawrence

reached a milestone. Hard to believe after the school's debt ridden past, but it was announced in September of 1961 that the Academy's endowment had exceeded \$1,000,000.

Construction of a new dormitory (Shedy Hall) was started the next year and enrollments reached another record: 229 students. A magazine for alumni was being published and applications were up from 135 two years earlier to 206. In 1963, the Thompson House was purchased and a new football/lacrosse field was added.

The prestigious private school did not go untouched by the undeclared war that ravaged Southeast Asia. Four of the school's alumni died in Vietnam while students at the school vacillated over just what the country's policy should be toward the war.

During the conflict, the multipurpose Ferguson Building, named for headmaster Arthur Ferguson and containing a library, music rooms and art rooms, was constructed in 1967 as was a roof for the hockey rink.

After the retirement of Ferguson in 1969, Benjamin Williams III became headmaster and immediately reformed the school's traditional curriculum, modified the coat-and-tie dress code, expanded the student council, increased evening study hall exemptions and removed the limits for visits to Groton stores (which had been restricted to Tuesday and Saturday afternoons).

Williams allowed long hair by the next year and for the 1971-1972 school year, female students entered the Academy for the first time in 73 years. The five young women brought the year's enrollment up to 278.

By 1974, Bigelow Hall had been converted to a female dorm, four of five new faculty members were women, women's studies became part of the curriculum and girls' varsity sports were introduced. One year later, girls accounted for one-third of the total enrollment.

Since then, a student center was built (1980), the Shedy house was purchased (1987) and plans for a 40,000 square foot athletic center were developed in 1990. Ground breaking for the athletic center came on May 15, 1992 and today construction on the facility is ahead of schedule.

Two hundred years after the "Public School" was established in a single whitewashed building on a Groton hill, Lawrence Academy is ready for two hundred more.

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# Groton Public Library celebrating its 100 year history

**by Christine Gillette**

The Groton Public Library began in an office in Gerrish's store on Main Street between the Groton Inn and Lowell Road in 1834, when Caleb Butler allowed Groton residents to borrow books from several shelves for a charge of two to three cents a week.

Groton's first free public library was established in 1854, the same year as the Boston Public Library. The new free library was set up with a gift of \$500 from the Honorable Abbott Lawrence of Boston, who grew up in Groton. Lawrence made his gift on the condition the town match the sum to be used for a public library.

The town accepted Lawrence's condition and a committee was formed to decide how to spend the \$1,000 allocation and to find a site for the new library. The committee consisted of George S. Boutwell, George F. Farley, Joshua Green, David Fosdick, and John Boynton.

The committee decided the new location of the library would be at Margaret Blake's store on the corner of Main Street and Station Avenue in the current location of Bay Bank Harvard Trust. Inside the store, Blake sold paper, pencils, pins, and needles, and other supplies. For an annual salary of \$50, Blake oversaw the town's first free library for five years.

In 1855, the year after the library was set up at Blake's store, the first catalog listed between 700 and 800 books in its collection, including a few novels.

The library was moved to Town Hall in 1860, and was located in a small room to the right of the front door. Henry Woodcock became the librarian, and for the next several years, the library barely got by, receiving little public money besides the occasional contribution from the town's dog tax. (Revenue from dog licenses still go to the library, while library fines go into the town's general fund.) The years of the Civil War brought little financial support to the library.

The library was moved again in April 1867 to a building called Liberty Hall that stood on the corner of Main and Court Streets where Sargent's Pharmacy is now located. Charles Woolley took over the operations of the library, and greatly opposed having any fiction selections available, despite the wishes of residents, who craved more novels.

Woolley's opposition to the demands of residents angered townspeople, who called a Special Town Meeting to compel the Library Committee to order the purchase of more fiction selections. One hundred and sixty residents signed the petition circulated for the Special Town Meeting. In response, Woolley started a library of his own, separate from the Groton Public Library. Woolley loaned books in his collection out for six cents a week, and his private library was later bought by the town of Westford when they were forming their own library.

During the same period, the Farmers' Club began collecting books for a small library for members' use, and its selections were later donated to the Groton

Public Library with the condition that \$6 be spent annually for agricultural books.

The library was moved back to Town Hall in 1876, this time to a large well-lighted room in the rear of the post office within the building that became known as the Old Library Room. The Board of Trustees appointed Miss Jennie Thayer to the post of librarian, a position she held for 16 years.

At the time of the 1876 move, the library's collection numbered near 2,500 with a circulation of over 4,500 books annually. By 1886, the annual circulation had climbed to over 12,000 even though the town's population was nearly the same. An 1884 bequest by William Dalrymple of Charlestown gave the library \$2,500 to spend on books, and a similar bequest within the next few years from former Groton resident Augustus Fletcher brought the library \$1,000. Groton resident Luther Blood, one of the people the town's Blood - Bigelow - Warren - Shepley - Ames Free Lecture Fund is named for, also gave the library \$1,000 in his will.

Thayer left Groton in 1891 to take a position with the Boston Public Library, and was replaced by Miss Emma Blood.

The library finally gained a permanent home in 1893, due to the generosity of Mrs. Charlotte A.L. Sibley. Sibley offered Groton \$4,000 toward the cost of constructing a building to house the library, which she raised to \$12,000 to get Town Meeting to agree to the deal. Sibley had to enlist the aid of Endicott Peabody to get the town to vote in favor of accepting her offer.

The library's building was designed by Boston architect Arthur Rotch, the grandson of the Honorable Abbott Lawrence whose



The Groton Public Library as it looks today. (Ruth F. Gay)

\$500 donation in 1854 allowed the town to buy books for its first public library. Rotch donated his services to the town.

The overall cost of the library building was \$27,700, with \$12,000 coming from Sibley and the remaining \$15,700 from a town appropriation.

Construction started on the library in 1892 with the laying of a cornerstone that was opened at the centennial celebration in 1992. Inside the cornerstone were accounts of life in Groton in 1892, newspapers, town reports, and many other materials detailing what Groton was like at the turn of the century.

The new yellow-brick building was dedicated with a ceremony on May 18, 1893, at which Colonel Daniel Needham presided. A prayer was given by Reverend Joshua Young, and then Governor George Boutwell (also a library trustee) and General William Bancroft delivered

addresses to Groton townspeople.

The building committee turned over the keys to the library trustees, and the new Groton Public Library began its 100 years of continuous service to the town.

The library celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1905, with an open house and the distribution of a history of its first 50 years written by Mrs. Mary T. Shumway.

The library spent 1907 and 1908 recataloging books, and underwent some physical changes in 1910 and 1911, when it was redecorated and electricity was installed.

In 1915, a West Groton branch library was set up in a small room at Tarbell School.

Groton resident and historian Dr. Samuel A. Green left the library \$3,000 to be used for the purchase of non-fiction books, and in 1921, the library gained even more volumes when a collection of books were donated by the Tarbell family.

The library was forced to close for the winter in 1923 due to a coal shortage, and a room at the Colonial Gift Shop was used to circulate books.

In 1926, the John Lawrence Fund was established with a gift of \$2,000, and is still used to enhance the library. The Robbins Fund was established later to benefit the library, and in years when the library did not receive enough funding to buy books, the fund was used.

Two years later, a room at the library was converted to a Children's Room, with Miss Clarissa Coburn appointed as the first children's librarian.

The West Groton branch library moved from Tarbell School in 1933 to what was known as Rockwood House. The Certified Dry Mat Corporation (Groton Leatherboard) gave the branch library the money to relocate and to equip and furnish the new site.

1933 also marked the first year the librarian began sending books monthly to the Boutwell and Tarbell Schools to be used by students in grades one through six.

Emma Blood celebrated 50 years as librarian on March 4, 1941, and held the position until she resigned in 1948. Clarissa Coburn took over, and Ruth Sheedy became the new children's librarian.

In 1955, borrowers at the library could for the first time take books off the shelves themselves. Prior to that, the librarian was the only one allowed to take books down, and the librarian and stacks were separated from the public with a barricade. To accommodate the change, the stack room was reorganized to improve access to books, and new lighting was installed.

In 1958, the library trustees studied increasing the collection to

include records, films, and pictures, and continued working with the schools to acquire research books and other special materials for use by students.

Clarissa Coburn retired in 1962, and was succeeded by Viola Lawrence. Lawrence previously was the branch librarian in West Groton.

Starting in 1965, the library trustees spent \$32,000 to make many changes to the library, including moving the children's room downstairs to an area called Sibley Hall, improving lighting and floor coverings, and installing a new heating system. The former children's room became an adult reading and study room. The new children's room was completed in 1969.

The Friends of the Library were formed in 1967 by Mrs. John Bruner and Mrs. Henry Brown. The organization would go on to hold an annual book sale and many other events to benefit the library.

Helen Maynard replaced Viola Lawrence as librarian in 1973.

In 1974, the West Groton branch library was closed after 59 years when the Groton Leatherboard Company sold the Rockwood House, its home for 41 years.

The Sibley Hall meeting room was completed in 1976, and the first meeting was held there by the library trustees, featuring a speech by Library Trustee Roland Sawyer.

Owen Smith Shuman was appointed in November 1987 to replace Helen Maynard, and is the current Library Director.

The Groton Public Library is currently celebrating its centennial with a series of events kicked off with a cornerstone tea in 1992, the opening of the cornerstone, and ending with a special celebration in May 1993.



Groton High School, also known as Butler High School, before it was burned. Prescott School is now built on this site. Note the cross on the steeple. (Postcard courtesy Ralph Smith)



Lawrence Academy faculty and students in 1884. Principal Thompson is fourth from the left in the front row. (Courtesy Lawrence Academy)



Lawrence Academy, before the fire. The schoolhouse faced Main Street. (Postcard courtesy Ralph Smith)

## Nashoba Credit Union: 30 years of continuous community service

From a home's living room and \$800, Groton's Nashoba Credit Union has grown by leaps and bounds over the past 30 years to serve over 6,000 local members.

Since the beginning, Nashoba Credit Union has had the needs of the local community at its heart because it was started by local community members. In September of 1963, several Groton residents literally got together in a kitchen, pooled their resources of \$798 on the table and started a credit union. The creation of such a union was intended to serve the needs of the average person since banks in those days concerned themselves primarily with commercial transactions and loans.

The bank operated from the living room of the Powers residence until February of 1964 when it moved to the Boutwell School and then to Bob Moison's Hardware Store. It was not until 1974 that the credit union took up residence in its modern building at 294 Main Street.

Today, the credit union continues the traditions started by its founders three decades ago. Nashoba continues to concern itself primarily with providing local residents with the best possible service.

"Credit unions were started to provide smaller loans and they're our foundation today," said Nashoba's Chief Financial Officer David Call. "We're not interested in just making money. We're more interested in providing for our members from the service standpoint."

While other bank directors are paid hefty salaries per meeting attended, Nashoba's ten directors are all volunteers who are not paid at all. Nashoba is obviously bonded to the community from the bottom to the very top.

"We were founded in Groton to serve the people of Groton and that's what we intend to do," said Call. "We have no desire to be a conglomerate, we just want to serve the people."

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Julia Chadwick	Mimmu Sloan
Lynn Chapman	Kathy Townsend
Rosita Corey	Joan Wheeler
Karen Dolimount	Jan Woodward

GALLERY HOURS  
Wednesday through Sunday, 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.  
(Other times arranged by appointment)

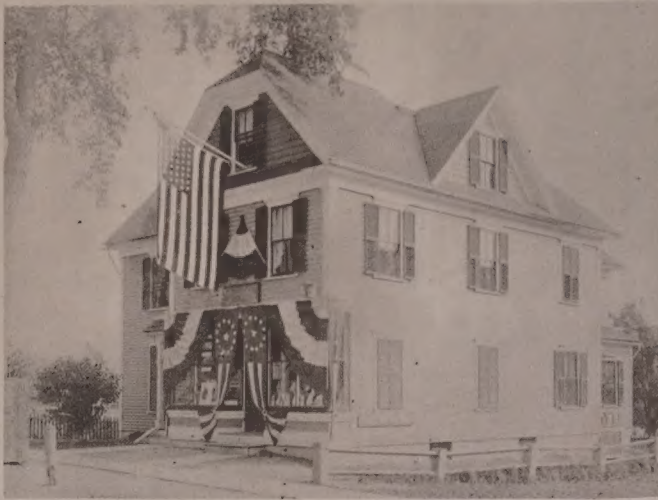
We look forward to meeting and greeting you soon.

Cordially,  
Sheila Simollardes

**Gallery Cornucopia**  
at The Appleworks  
325 Ayer Road,  
Post Office Box One  
Harvard, MA 01451  
(508) 772-6701



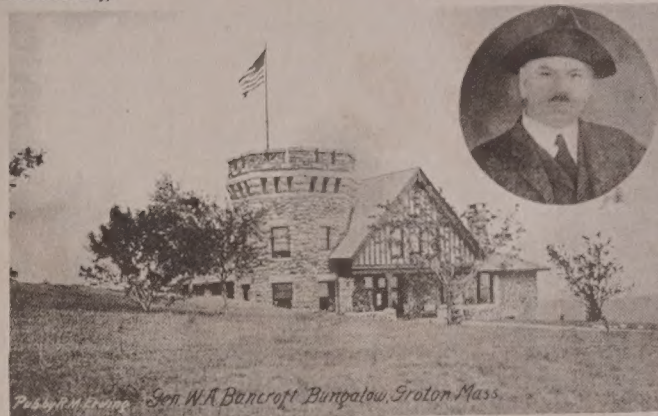
# Groton through the ages



Bruce's Pharmacy on Main Street in 1905, decorated for the 250th birthday of the town. (Courtesy Groton Historical Society)



Old Ayer Road in Groton, heading toward town center in 1934. (Postcard courtesy Groton Historical Society)



The Bancroft Bungalow built in 1904 as servant's quarters for the castle that never materialized. The ruins can still be seen on Gibbet Hill. (Postcard courtesy Ralph Smith)



Main Street Groton in 1900. (Photo courtesy Groton Historical Society)



The Legion Hall's roof was ripped off in the Hurricane of 1938. (Photo courtesy Ralph Smith)



Lawthorpe School, now Country Day School in Groton. (Postcard courtesy Ralph Smith)



The Lawrence Academy Schoolhouse, in the 1950s, before it burned to the ground. (Postcard courtesy Ralph Smith)



The Lawrence Homestead on Farmers Row. (Postcard courtesy Groton Historical Society)



The School House, Groton School (Postcard courtesy Ralph Smith)



# ***For over 30 years***

## ***has proven that...***

# ***Members make the difference!***

**P**eople helping people is the cornerstone of the credit union movement, and has been for more than 80 years. To define a credit union is simple...it is a cooperative group that makes loans to its members at low interest rates and pays them competitive interest rates on their savings.

As America's only not-for-profit, member-owned financial cooperatives, credit unions are far from typical and that's a difference we're proud of. Nashoba Credit Union has been a part of the Groton community for over 30 years. What began as a small group of local businessmen working together has now become a large group of over 6000 diversified members from

every walk of life.

More people are seeing the benefits of switching their accounts to Nashoba Credit Union every day. We are a full service financial institution, providing a complete range of loan services, savings accounts, checking accounts and a 24 hour networked ATM machine with 2 convenient locations. As an added service all deposits are fully insured by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) and the Massachusetts Credit Union Share Insurance Corporation (MSIC).

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our members and staff for their commitment to making Nashoba



Brenda Bergeson, Member Service and  
Judy Seidl, Groton Branch Manager

Credit Union a strong, solid part of the Groton community.

We also extend an invitation to anyone who would like to come in to our office for information. We know you will find our staff and management courteous and helpful. After all, they are credit union members too and are living proof that credit union members really do make a difference!

*"Your Community's Credit Union"*

# **NASHOBA**



# **CREDIT UNION**

294 MAIN STREET

GROTON, MA 01450

(508)448-3553